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ABSTRACT

In 1999, Public Education Network received a 3-year grant as part of a set of projects to better link research and data to policy and practice change. The project was intended to build public knowledge and understanding of how to improve teaching through the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data on teachers and teaching. The project consisted of two phases of work in eight communities nationwide. The first phase involved creating a data framework. The second involved a public engagement effort to disseminate findings to the public. This action guide builds on the experiences at the eight sites. It is a tool for community groups that want to build public knowledge and understanding and take action to support quality teaching. The guide offers ways to engage communities in actions that will improve the quality of teaching in the public schools. It contains information to help community groups develop the leadership capacity, incentives, and opportunities needed for community change. The four chapters are: (1) "Designing a Teacher Quality Initiative"; (2) "Identifying, Collecting, and Analyzing Data"; (3) "Engaging the Community"; and (4) "Putting Things in Motion." A list of resources is included. (SM)

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A Community Action Guide to Teacher Quality

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United States Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
Discretionary Grant Award Number R215U990014

In October 1999, Public Education Network (PEN) received a three-year discretionary grant from the US Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), as part of a set of projects designed to better link research and data to policy and practice change.

PEN dedicated its project to building public knowledge and understanding of how to improve teaching through the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data on teachers and teaching.

The project consisted of two phases of work, conducted in eight communities across the country. The first phase, which included the creation of a data framework followed by data collection and analysis, was completed in June 2001. Phase two, a public engagement effort to disseminate the findings from the data to the public, was completed in October 2002.

This action guide builds on the experiences and learning from our eight sites, and is intended as a tool for community groups that want to build public knowledge and understanding and take action to support quality teaching.

Chattanooga, TN	Lincoln, NE	McKeesport, PA	Philadelphia, PA
Greenville, SC	Los Angeles, CA	New York, NY	Raleigh, NC

Dear Community Leader,

Each school day, millions of children attending public schools across the nation are taught by caring, competent, knowledgeable teachers. The role that these teachers play in the lives of young people is enormous. In the instruction they give, in the encouragement they provide, and in the dreams they inspire, teachers help children realize the fullness of human potential.

Research confirms what many of us know from personal experience: Good teaching matters. And good teaching has never been more important than now in this era of standards-based reform. Our nation has set high goals for student learning, and teachers are the people who will make that learning happen.

What is the community's vision for quality teaching? What role can the community play in ensuring that all of its children are taught by highly qualified teachers? How can the community provide the conditions and supports that teachers need to be successful?

This guide is designed to help communities better understand teachers and teaching, as well as the community's role in achieving high-quality teaching. It is based on the experiences of eight local education funds—independent community-based advocacy organizations working to improve public schools and build citizen support for quality public education in low-income communities across the nation—that engaged their communities in an exploration of the quality of teaching in their public schools. These eight organizations were supported in this important work by a grant from the US Department of Education administered by Public Education Network.

While teachers, administrators, and policymakers bear much of the responsibility for the quality of teaching, they cannot and should not do it alone. In a democratic society, teaching is a public act. If teaching is to be strengthened and supported, it needs public understanding and it must have public action.

We hope this guide will help every community improve the quality of teaching in its public schools and, ultimately, the quality of public education for all of our nation's children.

Sincerely,

Wendy D. Puriefoy

Wendy D. Puriefoy
President
Public Education Network

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Community Action

Surveys suggest that 70 percent of registered voters—approximately 91 million people[1]—believe our public education system needs to be completely replaced or changed in a significant way.[2]

Think about that: 91 million Americans want a dramatic overhaul of public education. Now think about this: What if those 91 million people *did something* about it? What if 91 million people took action on an issue they said was important to them?

An engaged, empowered public is not an ideal—it is a necessity for good, sustainable decisions about our education system, our economy, our environment, our security, our future.

This guide offers ways to engage your community in actions that improve the quality of teaching in your public schools; however, the underlying philosophy of the guide can be applied to any issue. Without an engaged, empowered public, we will face the "tragedy of the commons," the ruin of a good that benefits everyone because no one takes responsibility for it. To avoid this scenario, communities must wield leadership, develop capacity, and have access to the incentives and opportunities necessary for change.

Community organizations are the primary audience for this publication. They occupy an essential role in making conditions for change possible and often provide the initial leadership that moves people from simple recognition of a problem to the concrete action required to solve it.

Quality Teaching

Efforts to improve our system of education have been around almost as long as public education itself. The release of the landmark report *A Nation At Risk* in 1983 spurred significant system-level and school-level changes in the 20 years that have followed. Some central questions, however, remain: Have we changed what happens in the classroom? Have we improved the core function of teaching and learning? The only plausible response: not as much as we need to.

The 2001 *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) federal legislation introduces requirements that speak to the bottom line of what happens in the classroom. Specifically, it establishes the common-sense expectation that all children will be instructed by "highly qualified" teachers—***highly qualified*** defined as teachers who are fully certified and/or licensed by the state, have a bachelor's degree, and demonstrate mastery of the subject areas they teach.[3]

NCLB requirements present community organizations with a strategic opportunity to shape local discussions and policies relating to teacher quality. The new teacher requirements, and the potential consequences of not meeting them, give communities

Linking Teacher Quality to Student Achievement

In a Tennessee study, teachers were divided into five categories based on student performance. Students with teachers in the top category realized average gains of 52 percentile points on a standardized test. Students with teachers in the bottom category realized an average gain of 14 percentile points—less than one-third the improvement of students with more effective teachers. (William L. Sanders and June C. Rivers, "Cumulative and Residual Effects of Teachers on Future Students." [Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center, 1996.])

In Alabama, Ronald Ferguson and Helen Ladd demonstrated the correlation between teacher test scores and student achievement by comparing student achievement in two schools—one predominately African American with less qualified teachers, the other predominately white with better qualified teachers. They discovered that an increase of just one standard deviation in the verbal ability test scores of teachers at the African-American school offset about half the difference in student achievement between the two schools. (Helen F. Ladd, ed., *Holding Schools Accountable: Performance Based Reform in Education.* The Brookings Institution, 1996.)

A Texas study revealed that 40 percent of the difference in student scores on standardized math and reading tests was attributable to teacher qualifications, in this instance as measured by teacher scores on licensing exams, years of experience, and possession/lack of a graduate degree. (Bryan Goodwin, Improving Teaching Quality: Issues and Policies. Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory Policy Brief, June 1999.)

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data reveals that, after controlling for student characteristics such as poverty and language status, the strongest positive predictor of state-level student achievement is the percentage of teachers in each state with full certification and a major in the subjects they teach. Research from Tennessee, Texas, Massachusetts, California, and Alabama suggests a correlation between student achievement levels and the quality of their teachers. (Education Trust, "Good Teaching Matters," *Thinking K–16,* volume 3, issue 2, Summer 1998.) More information on NAEP data can be found at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/.

For a general overview of the importance of teacher quality relative to other school factors, see Dan Goldhaber, "The Mystery of Good Teaching," *Education Next,* Spring 2002. www.educationnext.org/20021/50.html.

a strong incentive to pay greater attention to teacher qualifications and to the structures that support quality teaching.

This guide is designed to help you engage members of your community in examining local teaching issues, choosing and prioritizing issues to address, and planning a strategy to improve the quality of teaching in your local schools.

Let's start by answering some basic questions: What do we mean by teacher quality? Why is teacher quality important? What is a teacher quality initiative?

What Does Teacher Quality Mean?

As used in this guide, *teacher quality* comprises (1) the aptitude, skills, experience, and beliefs that a teacher brings into the classroom, and (2) the structures, processes, resources, requirements, and public perceptions that influence who teaches, where they teach, and what happens in the classroom.

Teacher quality = teacher characteristics + school & community environment

A quality teacher is someone who has deep subject-matter knowledge, can use multiple teaching methods based on the level of student development, understands how to use assessments and other data to guide instructional choices, is sensitive to cultural and social conditions, knows students as individuals, and is committed to professional growth and continued learning.

But teacher quality is not just the knowledge, skills, and temperament a teacher brings to the classroom—it is also outside factors such as the process by which teachers are assigned to schools, the time made available during the day for planning, the leadership provided by principals, and the availability of critical resources.

This definition has clear implications for community organizations seeking to develop improvement strategies. In addition to looking at teacher characteristics, they must examine what structures exist to recruit, support, and retain highly qualified teachers, and what policies and incentives encourage ineffective teachers to build capacity or leave the profession.

Standards and equity issues also come into play. Fundamentally, quality teaching is about ensuring that all students—including those living in poverty, those with disabilities, and those learning English as a second language—achieve high standards of performance.

Making sure that the people who teach your children meet these requirements is a community-wide effort—an effort that, ideally, will result in supportive working conditions in every school building, public recognition of the important role of teachers, professional development linked to improved student performance, incentives linked to desired outcomes, and teacher salaries linked to knowledge, skills, and achievement.

Why Is Teacher Quality Important?

The competence of the teacher in the classroom is one of the most critical components in school improvement. Because of its proven relationship to student achievement, teacher quality is of particular concern in communities across the country. In a national poll conducted by Public Education Network, the public ranked raising teacher quality as the highest approach to improving education.[4] It is an issue ripe for community action, and it is an area in which changes in public policy can have a significant impact.

What Is a Teacher Quality Initiative?

A teacher quality initiative, or TQI, will and *should* vary by community: Community initiatives by their very nature target the unique needs and goals of individual communities. However, most TQIs will include the following core elements:

- A community vision for quality teaching
- Research on the current status, distribution, and flow of teacher qualifications in the community
- A prioritization of local teacher quality issues based on research and community input
- An examination of outside factors that affect the priority issues
- A community strategy to improve teacher quality based on identified priorities
- An action plan to implement the improvement strategy
- Ongoing assessment of the implementation of the improvement strategy

Within this broad framework, a TQI can take many forms. One community might work with state representatives to introduce a new bill; another might work with the school district administration to change how existing policies are implemented; still another might work with local colleges and universities to revise teacher preparation programs. All of these are valid ways to approach issues of teacher quality. The tools for this guide will help you decide which is appropriate for your community.

Overview

This guide contains information to help you develop the leadership, capacity, incentives, and opportunities needed for community change. The material is based on PEN's previous and ongoing work in teacher quality. As a national organization with members in 31 states and the District of Columbia, PEN has a broad base of teacher quality experience to share.

In 1999, PEN received funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement to award competitive grants in a two-phased process. In the first phase, the grantees planned their teacher quality initiatives and collected data using the data framework discussed in Chapter Two. In the second phase, they facilitated a community engagement process using the data collected in their locales. Eight communities won planning grants and five secured implementation grants. PEN drew from their experiences in creating this guide, and continues to provide them with technical assistance in their implementation efforts.

In all of its education reform work, PEN emphasizes the importance of engaging the public in determining and strengthening education policy. PEN believes that educational improvement efforts cannot be sustained unless community members, organized groups, and policymakers become actively involved. This guide is but one way PEN helps communities address teacher quality issues. Please visit PEN's website (www.PublicEducation.org) for more details.

Audience

The guide is intended for use by community organizations interested in education reform and familiar with local education issues:

- Community-based organizations with an educational mission, focus, or interest
- Local chapters of national organizations with an interest in education, such as Parents for Public Schools, NAACP, Urban League, Kiwanis, Rotary, and the League of Women Voters
- Local education funds (LEFs), community-based advocacy organizations uniquely positioned to engage local citizens in public education reform, many of whom are PEN members
- School districts hoping to work with external partners to address teacher quality issues
- Other organizations interested in partnering with an education-related organization to launch a TQI

Format

The guide has four chapters, each with an overview of what you should be able to accomplish after reading the chapter and using the related tips, tools, and resources.

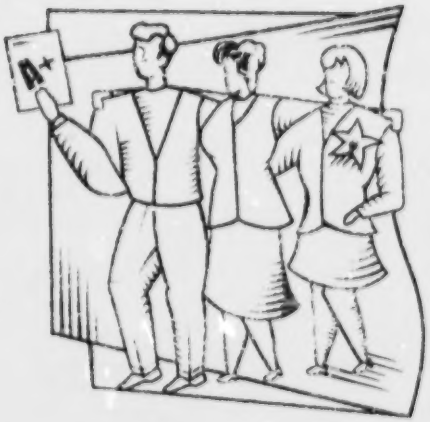
- **Chapter One, *Designing a Teacher Quality Initiative:*** provides an overview of TQI components and different TQI approaches. Helps clarify reasons to engage in a TQI, assess community capacity to initiate and sustain a TQI, evaluate the external environment for launching a TQI, and plan the TQI process. Community *leadership* is the primary focus of this chapter.
- **Chapter Two, *Identifying, Collecting, and Analyzing Data:*** describes a two-pronged collection process for gathering data on teacher characteristics and on the school and community environment that affects those characteristics. Presents a framework for selecting appropriate indicators, offers guidance on data collecting sources and methods, and gives advice on common problems in collecting and analyzing data. Developing community *capacity* is the primary focus of this chapter.
- **Chapter Three, *Engaging the Community:*** describes how public engagement brings value to the TQI and to the community members involved. Helps identify who makes up the "community," how to choose strategies for different types of engagement, and how to evaluate the success of engagement strategies. This chapter focuses on involvement *incentives* and engagement *opportunities.*
- **Chapter Four, *Putting Things in Motion:*** offers advice on how to prioritize teacher quality issues in relation to the community vision of what comprises quality teaching, how to develop a strategy for improving specific elements of local teacher quality, and how to craft an action plan for successful implementation of the improvement strategy. This chapter brings the concept of *leadership* full circle by moving leadership responsibilities from the organization into the community at large.

As indicated earlier, this guide features tips, tools, and resources to support you in your efforts. You will find tips related to the different components of a TQI at the end of each chapter. A comprehensive resource section is included at the end of the guide.

All tools are on the CD-ROM included with the guide. These tools are designed to guide you in planning and implementing the various activities needed to launch and sustain a teacher quality initiative. Titles of all tools are listed in the chapter overviews, and brief descriptions of the tools are included when reference is made to their use.

ONE

Designing a Teacher Quality Initiative



Chapter Highlights

- Clarifying reasons for launching a TQI
- Setting TQI goals
- Assessing internal capacity
- Scanning the external environment
- Determining best timing for a TQI launch
- Creating a TQI action plan: goals, indicators, activities, potential partners, estimated costs, and other key components
- Developing plans for TQI assessment

Chapter Tips

- Sustaining Productive Relationships with the Central Office
- Sustaining Productive Relationships with Principals and Teachers
- Roles and Responsibilities of Decision Makers vis-à-vis Teacher Quality

Chapter Tools

- Initiative Priorities
- Assessing Organizational Capacity
- Community Asset Map: Gauging the Climate for Reform, Scanning Decision Makers and Influencers, Stakeholder Analysis
- Evaluation Planner

Improving Conditions for Change by Exercising Leadership

There are few instances where meaningful public engagement and sustainable action can take place without effective leadership.

A community feeling apathetic, dissatisfied, confused, or even genuinely outraged regarding teacher quality will tend to remain in a state of inertia until a group steps up to provide the initial leadership that challenges the apathy and harnesses the dissatisfaction into a community-wide improvement effort. As an organization concerned about education, this is your charge.

The design of your teacher quality initiative will play a significant role in determining how successful the resulting effort will be. This chapter provides guidance, tips, tools, and resources for designing an effective teacher quality initiative.

Understanding TQI Design

There are numerous reasons why a community might want to launch a teacher quality initiative: to raise awareness of the issue, to address a previously identified problem within the school system, to rally and strengthen the community to take responsibility for the quality of education in its public schools. Indeed, there are as many reasons for launching a TQI as there are communities.

These varying reasons, combined with the diverse internal and external factors each organization faces, mean that the focus, scope, and actions of each TQI will vary from community to community. Nonetheless, there are components—such as research, community engagement, action planning, implementation, and evaluation—that are common to every TQI.

While teacher quality is the primary focus area of all TQIs, collecting and analyzing data will help you target your focus. In addition to deciding how to focus your efforts, you must also estimate how expansive your TQI can be. The scope of your work will vary based on the capacity, experiences, and resources of your community (see Sample TQI Goals). The following areas of focus will help you determine the scope and actions of your TQI:

- **Teacher quality:** identifying and sustaining a specific teacher quality objective
- **Community capacity:** strengthening the ability of community members to bring about change
- **Community access:** making the "avenues of change"—the channels through which actions are initiated, authorized, and/or implemented—open to community action

Don't panic. Your TQI does *not* have to address all of these focus areas to be effective. If your community has limited or no experience in community-based action, your goal simply might be to hold a series of focus groups on teacher quality, see what people think, and report back the results to the community, the school district, and the media. That in itself is a worthwhile undertaking.

Even in a TQI of limited focus and scope, always keep an eye out for opportunities to build community capacity and increase accessibility to the governance system. Remember, there are more than 91 million people out there waiting for a call to action.

SAMPLE TQI GOALS

FOCUS	SCOPE		
	Initial	Well Developed	Ambitious
Setting specific teacher quality objectives	Forging a common definition of teacher quality	Improving working conditions for teachers	Increasing the percentage of highly qualified teachers at low-performing schools
Strengthening community capacity	Helping community members gain more knowledge about the state of teacher quality	Training volunteers to conduct school audits, observations/ interviews based on formal protocols	Actively preparing community members for public office through a public office training academy
Opening avenues of change	Facilitating community participation in city council meetings by providing transportation, childcare, translation services	Establishing a citizen advisory council to the school board	Redistricting the community to gain more equitable representation for those traditionally disenfranchised

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TYPICAL TQI STAGES & ACTIVITIES

Stage 1: Organizing for Success
Outline a broad vision
Assess organizational capacity
Scan external environment
Decide whether to move forward, postpone, other options
Stage 2: Collecting Data & Engaging the Public
Collect and analyze data on teacher characteristics
Engage community
Collect data on external factors affecting teaching
Stage 3: Planning for Action
Prioritize TQ goals
Engage community in action planning
Strategize action plan
Stage 4: Implementing & Evaluating
Implement action plan
Continue to engage community
Evaluate results
Revise action plan as needed

At first glance, a TQI may appear to be a linear process; however, experience shows it is really iterative in nature. For example, after engaging the community in a town hall meeting (Stage 2), you may need to revisit your external environmental scan (Stage 1) before moving on to planning for action (Stage 3).

***Note:** Time frames for each stage will vary significantly depending on the goals identified and the action strategies adopted. Based on other communities' TQI experience, the first three stages can take six months to a year or more, and the implementation and evaluation phase can last two or more years. TQIs also can spark related projects, such as annual teaching satisfaction surveys, that go on to become regular fixtures in the community landscape.*

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Clarifying Purpose, Laying Out a Vision, Setting Goals

You may already have some notion of the scope and focus of your TQI regarding how comprehensive it should be and where you might focus your initial efforts.

However, it is important to move beyond instinct and clarify why you want to embark on a teacher quality initiative. The rationale can then be used to develop a more formal vision for your TQI.

Your reasons for launching a TQI will influence how you determine action steps, prioritize resources, recruit partners, and engage community members. To help you prioritize your TQI goals, ask yourself these questions:

- What goals do we hope to achieve with this initiative?
- What community capacities do we hope to build through this initiative?
- What community access to decision-making power do we hope to gain through this initiative?

The answers to these broad questions will set the stage for creating a vision for your TQI. Remember, specific TQI goals should be based on thorough research of local teacher quality issues and decided upon in conjunction with partners and community members. Goals in the formative stage of the TQI process should provide direction rather than define a specific destination.

Initiative Priorities in CD-ROM **Tools** provides an in-depth process to identify priorities and select goals for your TQI.

The TQI vision statement will be refined throughout the initial stages of the initiative; for now, its role is to set a general course and paint a big picture that motivates people to join your cause.

According to *The Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining, and Enjoying the Journey*, published by the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, a vision statement should include the following elements:

- **A description of what will be accomplished, where, and for whom.** The vision should present an exciting destination worth going after; early on, the statement will not include how results will be achieved.
- **An account of the scope of the work.** The vision statement must indicate how big, how many, how much.
- **A statement of the unique purpose.** The vision must offer a clear statement of purpose that differentiates the TQI mission from those of other organizations and other initiatives.
- **Clarity.** The vision statement must be easy to understand, yet go beyond trite phrases.

After you have clarified your purpose and laid out your vision for the initiative, you are ready to assess whether your organization, and the environment in which it operates, is positioned to support a TQI.

Assessing Internal Capacity

There are any number of activities you and your partners can engage in during the TQI process. Some will require specific expertise, and all will require time and resources.

Accordingly, you must determine whether you have the expertise, and can devote the time and resources, needed to begin and sustain an initiative. To do so, you must first identify the kinds of activities required for your initiative and then assess what resources you can allocate to those activities.

The tools for Chapter One are designed to help you determine whether your board and staff members are prepared to launch a TQI. They also can help you identify what assistance or expertise may be needed from other organizations.

Assessing Organizational Capacity in CD-ROM **Tools** lays out task areas and potential activities for each area, and gives space to record available and needed resources. It also provides a list of guiding questions in three capacity areas:

- Organizational infrastructure
- Staff expertise
- Financial resources

One important component of a community initiative is the ability to unite the strengths of many groups and individuals around a common goal. No organization should launch a TQI without partners; solo attempts not only limit resources and capacity, they undermine the fundamental nature of a collaborative community effort.

Scanning the External Environment

In addition to considering your capacity to sustain a TQI, you need to examine the external environment to determine whether it will support your TQI. The external environment is influenced by factors such as the political climate, public mood, budget surpluses/deficits, school system and union leadership, and the existence of other TQIs.

The *Community Asset Map* in CD-ROM **Tools** provides instruments to evaluate external community factors.

The environment also is shaped by the "players" within that environment. For the purposes of this guide, these players are divided into two groups: decision makers and influencers.

Decision Makers

Decision makers are individuals and groups with direct control over the policies and practices that can effect change in teacher quality:

- Judicial systems
- Local elected officials/bodies
- State elected officials/bodies
- School boards
- School superintendents
- State education offices, state boards of education, chief state school officers
- Teachers unions
- University-based and alternative teacher preparation programs

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See **Tips** (pp. 21–22) for a brief description of the roles decision makers play in the education system and their influence on teacher quality. The *Community Asset Map* in CD-ROM **Tools** includes questions that can help you assess the general characteristics of these groups and gain a better understanding of how you might work with them on teacher quality issues. Also, see Chapter Three (p. 49) for more information on working with organized groups and individual community members.

Influencers

Influencers are individuals and groups that can influence those with direct control over policy and legislative changes. Decision makers may sometimes feel compelled to follow the wishes of those who have influence. Individuals and groups perceived to be influencers are listed below:

- Advisors or staff to elected officials
- Community groups and civic organizations
- Labor unions
- Local and national media
- Local businesses/business organizations
- Parent groups
- Powerful community members
- Religious organizations

There is no hard and fast rule as to who is a decision maker and who is an influencer; in either instance, the tools for this chapter can help you determine how to shape your TQI. For example, in some communities, the teachers union might be quite powerful and play a decision-maker role. In others, the union may not have a collective bargaining unit and teachers will have a less influential role.

Designing an Initiative Strategy

Once you have identified the reasons why you want to engage in a TQI, have assessed your internal capacity to do the work, and have scanned the environment for receptivity, you are ready to (1) decide whether to proceed and, if yes, (2) design a broad strategy for the initiative.

The decision to embark on a teacher quality initiative should be based on careful assessment of the resources you can bring to the initiative and whether the external environment offers an opportunity for success. Most organizations will face some obstacles to success; it is unrealistic to expect that all factors will be favorable. Given the importance of placing a quality teacher in every classroom, try to work through moderate obstacles. However, some circumstances could so severely hamper TQI prospects that it would be best not to proceed at that time. The tools for this guide can help you make that decision.

Once the decision to launch a TQI has been made, begin crafting a strategy. If you are taking the lead in proposing a teacher quality initiative, develop some broad ideas for the vision, goals, activities, and time frames before approaching potential partners. Of course, these ideas will change and become more clearly defined as new partners, and the perspectives they bring to the table, participate in shaping the initiative.

During this early stage, take time to focus on how the initiative process will unfold and what might be the impact of the following components:

- Teacher quality goals, community capacity-building goals, community access goals
- Results indicators/progress benchmarks
- Possible activities
- Staff responsibilities
- Time frame
- Partners/potential partners
- Activities outsourced to other organizations or partners
- Required resources and funding

MAINTOWN, USA

Initiating a Plan and Building a TQI Partnership

The Maintown Center City Action Initiative (MCCAI) is dedicated to strengthening Maintown's downtown area. For several years, MCCAI has been conducting an annual survey of area resident attitudes on local issues. Increasingly, residents have been expressing concern about the quality of teaching in the Maintown public schools.

Madeline Stockton, MCCAI's executive director, called her staff together to talk about examining the issue of teacher quality in greater depth and perhaps developing an action plan to address the community's concerns. The staff agreed the issue was worth examining, and John Houseman, MCCAI's assistant director of education issues, volunteered to put together a framework for discussing the project.

At the next staff meeting, Houseman presented the following questions for discussion:

- What do we hope to achieve regarding teacher quality? What is our vision?
- What do we hope the community will gain as a result of this project?
- What do we as an organization hope to gain as a result of this project?
- Who else should be involved in this project?
- How conducive is the current environment to launching this kind of project?
- What resources do we have available or could we obtain to sustain this project?
- How will we know if we are successful?

The Center City staff spent the next two weeks reflecting on answers to these questions. At the next meeting, Houseman led the group in drafting an initial vision for the project and broad responses to the set of questions.

Stockton then discussed the project with leaders of organizations the staff felt had partnership potential for the project. Representatives from these organizations met with Center City staff and then reflected on the project idea over the next several weeks.

Two organizations agreed to join the project and began working with MCCAI to come up with candidates for a task force to guide the project's work.

The resulting Maintown Teacher Quality Task Force has 17 members: two from MCCAI, one from each partner organization, a school board member, a representative of the district administration, a union representative, two teachers, a principal, one college of education faculty member, a representative of the local chamber of commerce, two parent representatives, a community member who is not the parent of a public school student, and two high school students.

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The sample one-page Sample Project Plan Overview (p. 19); the *Evaluation Planner* in CD-ROM **Tools,** which can help you develop goals, indicators, and other components of an assessment strategy; and the tips and tools referenced in Chapter Four will help you map out these components.

Goals. Once you have identified the purpose/motivation for the initiative, outline some broad goals for teacher quality, for community capacity to effect change, and for community access to decision-making structures. Remember, improving education and transforming the public into a concerned, engaged community should be the drivers of your initiative. With this in mind, it is sometimes best to set more moderate goals for your initial TQI work and see them as first steps toward longer-term goals.

Indicators and benchmarks. Make sure the goals you select are measurable. Identify the indicators by which you will assess achievement and then establish specific benchmarks for those indicators. See page 18 for an overview of evaluation process elements.

Activities. There are a wide variety of TQI activities. However, resource limitations more than likely will require you to prioritize your activities; the choices you make should be based on your TQI goals.

For example, if "making teacher quality a priority issue for community members" is the primary goal of the initiative, you will want to focus your activities on engaging the community rather than on developing a large electronic database of information on teacher characteristics. The activities you select should satisfy the following criteria:

- Directly further initiative goals and advance the initiative vision
- Are aligned with one another
- Are supported by available resources
- Work well in the current external environment

Staff responsibilities. After identifying your TQI activities, you will need to assign tasks to staff members and volunteers. Activities will be accomplished only if someone is given a specific responsibility and is held accountable for its execution. Naturally, you will want to match tasks to the skills and interests of staff members to the extent possible.

Time frame. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, initiative time frames will vary based on the goals and activities selected. In general, build in time for the unanticipated circumstances that accompany most projects.

Partners/potential partners. Engaging the community is a key TQI component; effective community engagement focuses on three audiences: individuals, organized groups, and policymakers. Chapter Three, *Engaging the Community*, focuses on engaging individuals and organized groups while Chapter Four, *Putting Things in Motion*, explores working with policymakers.

Community organizations, by their very nature, reflect the importance of partnership in developing a shared vision and in working collaboratively to plan strategies, activities, and resources aligned with that common vision.

In the formative stages of an initiative, it is important to assess your internal capacity and scan your environment to determine which organized groups would be good partners and what kind of approach to adopt in working with district policymakers and administrators. You also may decide to create a teacher quality task force or a similar group to lead the work of the initiative.

The *Community Asset Map* in CD-ROM **Tools** can help you assess the relevant characteristics of potential initiative partners and policymakers. Also, check out **Tips** (p. 20) for ways to initiate relationships with central office administrators, teachers, and principals.

Outsourced activities. Assess your internal capacity and the scope of required resources to determine whether your organization—or any of your TQI partners—can conduct the identified activities alone, or if you will need to rely on outside providers for data analysis, public opinion polling, and other specialized activities.

Resources. Identify who will be responsible for certain activities and the resources required for those activities. For example, if you plan to conduct focus groups, review logistics from beginning to end: locations, facilitators, questions, participants, supplies, refreshments, resulting reports, and dissemination methods.

Costs. TQI costs can range anywhere from $25,000 for a small, short-term initiative to more than $1 million for a large, multiyear project.

Based on PEN's experience in working with communities launching and supporting TQIs, the majority of funds go toward human resource costs: On average, 46 percent of the grant goes toward salaries, benefits, and training for staff and volunteers, and 23 percent is spent on subcontractors. Other spending categories included meetings (17 percent), printing and technology (4 percent), materials and equipment (2 percent), and administration/indirect (8 percent) costs.

Clearly, TQIs can be expensive—in terms of both money and human resources. So be creative and strategic in finding partners, donors, volunteers, in-kind resources, and bartering arrangements to help you meet the resource obligations.

Leverage resources. Donors are often more willing to provide funds if you can demonstrate that you have already raised some money. Write grant proposals stipulating that matching funds will be raised: This gives grantmakers confidence that other sources think your initiative is worthwhile and allows you to leverage early donor dollars for maximum potential. See *Grants* (p. 83) in **Resources** for ideas on sources of grant money.

Share the resource burden. Partners can help ease the TQI financial burden. Since so much of the cost of a TQI is related to human resources, finding partners that can dedicate staff to the initiative is very beneficial—not only in terms of cost sharing, but also in terms of ensuring that partners feel ownership of the initiative. One caveat: Too many partners can make forging a common vision and creating a unified action plan difficult, so be on the lookout for sponsors—organizations or individuals not actively involved in the TQI but able to contribute input and resources.

Use volunteers wisely. Because a TQI is so labor intensive, it is important to utilize volunteers wisely. Volunteers, however, are only as effective as the training, motivation, and opportunities you give them, so take time to devise a volunteer strategy. Dedicate staff to volunteer management; give volunteers real opportunities for involvement; provide training so they can develop capacity to do the work; and, finally, acknowledge and celebrate their work. Don't forget to actively seek out volunteers. People are willing to help—they just need to be asked.

Assessing Progress

Continual assessment provides the structure for an effective TQI, linking goals (beginning), activities (middle), and outcomes (end) in a coherent and logical manner. A good evaluation will provide you with answers to the following questions: How will I know if I have been successful? How can I use initial results to determine next steps?

Summative evaluation—evaluation to determine outcomes—and formative evaluation—evaluation to determine how activities and inputs contributed to those outcomes—can help you achieve the following objectives:

- Improve the effectiveness of current activities
- Support the project over the long term
- Provide insight into why goals are/are not being met
- Help leaders make decisions
- Document progress to funders

The Evaluation Components table lists types of evaluation components and examples of each one. A summative and formative evaluation of your work can be time consuming and complex. Though you may have the capacity to do your own evaluation, you may want to consider hiring outside evaluators. An external evaluator, whose sole task is to perform the evaluation, can offer objectivity and insight into your work as it progresses and make sure that the information collected is both quantitative and qualitative.

For an in-depth look at the evaluation process and its complexities, check out *The Evaluation Handbook*, published by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation (www.wkkf.org). Also, see the *Evaluation Planner* in CD-ROM **Tools**.

EVALUATION COMPONENTS

EVALUATION COMPONENT	EXAMPLE
Goal	• Increase community involvement in education.
Indicators	• Number of people participating in town meetings on education • Percentage of people voting in school board elections
Benchmarks	• The number of people participating in town meetings on education will increase 25 percent between the fall (beginning of initiative) and spring (midway through initiative) of the 2003–2004 school year. • Thirty-five percent of registered voters vote in next year's school board elections.
Data Sources	• Town meeting attendance tallies • Election records
Data Collection Methods	• Review of records
Reporting Mechanisms	• Report to the community • Newspaper articles

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Sample Project Plan Overview

The following is a simplified version of what your project plan overview might look like. ***Note:*** The "attachments" referenced in this sample are not included in the sample overview; they simply indicate a format you can use to keep your project overview to one page.

TQI Vision

All district students, particularly those with high needs, are taught by highly qualified teachers.

Goal 1: Teacher Quality

Increase the percentage of highly qualified teachers who teach at low-performing schools for at least five years.

Indicators

- The percentage of teachers at low-performing schools who have taught four-plus years.
- The percentage of highly qualified teachers at low-performing schools.
- *Highly qualified* is defined by the community during the initiative process.

Benchmarks

- Within three years, 60 percent of teachers in low-performing schools will have four-plus years of teaching experience
- Within three years, 90 percent of teachers in low-performing schools will meet or exceed the criteria for quality established during the community initiative process.

Goal 2: Community Capacity

Ensure that teacher quality becomes a priority issue for community members.

Indicators

- The percentage of community members demonstrating awareness of education issues as measured in written surveys
- The percentage of eligible voters voting in school board elections

Benchmarks

- Within one year, the percentage of community members correctly answering over half the questions on our education awareness survey will increase from 35 percent to 65 percent.
- In next year's school board election, the percentage of eligible voters voting will increase from 15 percent to 35 percent.

TQI Activities

- Conduct and analyze pre- and post-awareness surveys.
- Survey teachers as to satisfaction with working environment.
- Study concepts of/research on quality teaching.
- Train and use community members to conduct school climate audit.
- Attend school board meetings.
- Strengthen relationship with district administrators.
- Collect data about teacher characteristics locally and in surrounding communities.
- Conduct numerous community meetings, focus groups, and surveys to determine community ideas on teacher quality and inform them of research.
- Develop in conjunction with stakeholders a plan for increasing retention of highly qualified teachers at low-performing schools.

Time Frame

- Planning: July 2003–September 2003
- Initial Data Collection/Community Engagement: October 2003–March 2004
- Action Planning: March 2004–August 2004
- Initial Implementation: September 2004–May 2005
- Evaluation: June 2005–August 2005
- Continuing Implementation and Evaluation: through 2006

Partners/Potential Partners

- Youth, Inc. (See attachment)
- Supporting our Schools (See attachment)
- Chamber of Commerce

Staff Responsibilities (TBD)

Outsourced Activities (TBD)

Inputs/Costs (TBD)

TIP: Sustaining Productive Relationships

With the Central Office

- Set up a brief meeting with the district superintendent, or a representative, to present the idea of a teacher quality initiative. Prior to the meeting, send a brief summary of the TQI concept and what you would like to accomplish at the meeting.
- During the meeting, emphasize your desire to work in partnership with the district; explain the purpose of the initiative and present a preliminary plan for what the initiative would entail; solicit ideas for what goals and activities the district would like to see as part of the initiative; seek to discover any apprehensions the district might have about the initiative; offer some ideas for funding sources;[5] set a time to discuss a more in-depth plan.
- Stay in regular, open communication with the district office throughout the planning and implementation of the initiative to incorporate district input as possible.
- Strive to address district concerns.
- Recruit district administrators and staff to take part in initiative activities such as focus groups, site visits.

With Principals and Teachers

- Foster a project ethos of "working with" rather than "doing to" teachers.
- Involve teachers and principals from the very beginning; they should have a voice in designing the initiative.
- Seek out a broad range of teachers and principals to help in designing the initiative and other activities.
- Stay in regular, open communication with the unions throughout the planning and implementation of the initiative.
- Strive to address school personnel concerns.
- Take note of priorities highlighted by teachers and principals when identifying and acting on specific teacher quality issues.

TIP: Roles and Responsibilities of Decision Makers vis-á-vis Teacher Quality

District school boards. The school board is generally responsible for setting district-wide education policy and goals, for ensuring that district schools are meeting statewide standards, and for overseeing operational systems such as facilities and transportation. In its role as policymaker, the board approves district budgets—allocating funds among competing priorities, setting salary schedules, and negotiating salary issues with unions. The board also has authority to accept and administer federal and private funds. It typically hires the superintendent and may also approve the hiring of school principals and teachers. In some districts, the board may set standards for teachers.

District superintendent/central office staff. The superintendent is often the most visible representative of the district and is legally bound to execute school board policies. The superintendent has a role in creating a district culture, and in fostering decision making, risk taking, and a supportive environment for school and district staff. The superintendent, along with central office staff, is responsible for monitoring the progress of all schools and for reporting information to the board. The superintendent oversees the training and professional development of principals and teachers; monitors the distribution of materials, equipment, and information to schools; and hires, assigns, and fires principals and other school staff, and/or makes recommendations to the board on such matters.

Teachers unions. The roles and power of teachers unions vary among districts. In districts with strong collective bargaining units, unions can negotiate with the central office and school board to shape district policies that affect pay, working conditions, assignment policies, and tenure. In districts without unions, teacher associations still work closely with the central office and school board to influence certain policies.

Teacher preparation programs. College and university teacher preparation programs set admissions criteria for prospective students, create the curriculum and graduation standards for pre-service teachers, and in some instances provide professional development for current teachers. States must approve teacher preparation programs and, under recent federal legislation, are also responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs and reporting this information to the US Department of Education. In addition to state standards and federal requirements, post-secondary institutions must meet accreditation standards set by independent agencies. While accreditation is voluntary, it is very beneficial in recruiting quality students.

See *General Education Resources* (p. 73) in **Resources** for information on Title II requirements and accreditation organizations.

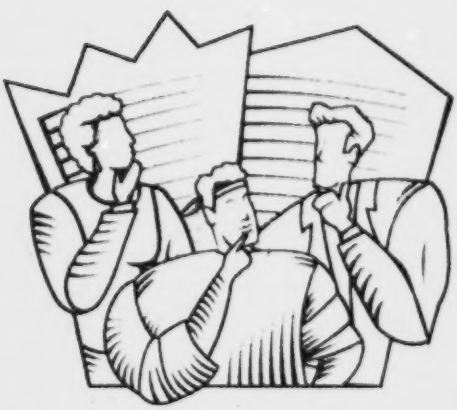
State/local governments. Education is primarily a state responsibility. Therefore, education responsibilities—setting teacher certification/licensure requirements, establishing accountability systems, determining budget and resource allocations—will vary state by state. Local governments have a role in shaping funding mechanisms, such as tax rates, and in allocating locally generated revenue, such as real estate taxes, to local school budgets.

State school board/state superintendent. State boards and superintendents are either elected or appointed and perform activities similar to their local counterparts. State school boards establish guidelines for implementing legislation enacted by the state regarding standard courses of study, accountability systems, and textbook selection. They recommend education budgets to the state legislature, and may also set school personnel benefit policies. States vary in how much control their state boards and departments of education have at the local level. You will need to examine state and district roles in your locality.

Judicial systems. The courts can play a pivotal role in educational issues through their decisions on school system policies for curricular materials, student assignment plans, and resource equity.

TWO

Identifying, Collecting, and Analyzing Data



Chapter Highlights

- Identifying initiative indicators
- Finding data sources
- Deciding on data collection methods
- Recognizing and responding to data collection challenges
- Deciding whether to outsource or perform data analysis internally
- Recognizing and responding to data analysis challenges

Chapter Tips

- Selecting Assessment Indicators
- Building Trust in Data Collection
- Non-District Sources of Data
- Data Collection Methods
- Addressing Data Collection and Analysis Issues

Chapter Tools

- Teacher Data Framework
- External Factors Framework
- Out-of-Field Teaching Memo
- Focus Group/Interview Questions
- Initiative Priorities
- Strategy Planner

Improving Conditions for Change by Building Community Capacity

Openness to change is to some extent determined by community capacity. *Capacity* typically refers to the skills, knowledge, and ability to accomplish certain tasks. In the case of a community's capacity to effect change in teacher quality, capacity could encompass numerous areas—grassroots organizing skills, knowledge of school and political systems, and the ability to persuade decision makers.

This chapter focuses on a specific type of capacity, namely, knowledge of the state of quality teaching and understanding of how certain factors affect teacher quality. This knowledge and understanding will help communities make stronger arguments and implement more effective strategies for change.

Data Overview

Once an overall strategy has been identified, you are ready to take the next step in launching a TQI: gathering and analyzing information about the state of teacher quality in your local schools. People generally have specific questions about the quality of teaching in their schools: How many teachers are qualified to teach in their subjects? How much experience do they have? How and where are the most qualified teachers assigned? How many teachers leave school every year? Are the best teachers the ones who are leaving?

In addition to ascertaining *what* the state of teacher quality is, you must also figure out *why* things are the way they are: Why does the district have fewer fully certified teachers than other comparable districts? Why do the least experienced teachers work with the most at-risk students? Why do the most qualified teachers leave to teach in the suburbs?

Clearly, these are important questions. This chapter will help you identify, collect, and analyze the data needed to answer them.

The state of teacher quality is strongly influenced by factors that determine who teaches, what they teach, and what happens when they are in the classroom. As a community organization spearheading a TQI, you will need to lead the community in coming to a deeper understanding of what quality teaching is and why it does or does not exist in your district. Your community must seek answers to these questions, use the information to make good decisions, and then take action on behalf of the children in your schools.

This chapter features a two-part data framework. The *Teacher Data Framework* will help you gain a fairly comprehensive picture of the characteristics of teachers working in your schools, how those characteristics differ from school to school, and how those characteristics have changed over time.

The *External Factors Framework* looks at environmental factors that affect whether good teaching can take place—school system factors such as hiring practices, pay and incentive structures, and working conditions; and community factors such as parental involvement, business support, and media coverage.

Begin by identifying and analyzing basic facts about teachers in your community. The *Teacher Data Framework* details ways to perform a needs assessment to inform your TQI strategy.

See CD-ROM **Tools** for a copy of the *Teacher Data Framework* and the *External Factors Framework*.

Using the Teacher Data Framework

Characteristics and Indicators

Many qualities influence how well a teacher teaches and, consequently, how well a student learns. From quantitative measures, such as scores on verbal ability tests, to qualitative characteristics, such as a nurturing attitude toward students, a good teacher is defined by multiple attributes, only some of which can be easily measured.

Trying to reduce a complex profession into a set of quantifiable indicators has obvious limitations. PEN's data framework, nevertheless, covers a wide array of teacher characteristics and includes indicators with a demonstrated link to teacher effectiveness as well as those likely to be of concern to community members.

Indicators in bold are those that research and PEN's past experience suggest should be given priority. Each community, however, should collect data on those indicators most appropriate to its local circumstances.

See *The Role of Teacher Characteristics in Student Achievement* (p. 74) in **Resources** for articles on links between teacher qualifications and student achievement. See **Tips** (p. 42) for questions to use in selecting indicators.

Three Framework Lenses: The Big Picture, Teacher Distribution, Teacher Flow

With the framework as a basis, the Big Picture, Teacher Distribution, and Teacher Flow "lenses" will help you get the most out of your data.

The Big Picture

Look at your community's pool of teachers as a whole to get the big picture of teacher quality in your district:

- How do district teachers fare on the framework indicators?
- How do district teachers compare to those in other districts/states, or against national data?
- How have these measures changed in the district over time?

Having data on district teachers as a whole offers a valuable snapshot of how local teachers compare to teachers in similar communities, to the state average, and to the national average. Such data can also reveal changes in teacher characteristics over time; identifying gaps and trends can help initiative partners and community members decide where to focus their efforts.

Beyond the big-picture comparison, though, most communities also face the reality and/or perception that the quality of teaching is not equal across all schools in a district, or across all districts in a region or state. Therefore, it is essential to disaggregate the data by subgroups to allow initiative stakeholders to see differences that exist between schools or districts. The following two lenses suggest ways to disaggregate teacher data.

Teacher Distribution

The teacher distribution lens helps the community discover *where* teachers with different characteristics are teaching. While a big-picture analysis might show that teachers in the district have an average of 10 years of experience, by disaggregating data according to low- and high-achieving schools, it becomes clear that teachers in low-achieving schools have an average of 3 years of experience while those in high-achieving schools have an average of 16 years of experience.

By reviewing teacher distribution, you should be able to spot inequities across schools or districts that could be addressed by changing policies or practices. These inequities can point to priority areas for further action.

To disaggregate data by teacher distribution, first decide which teacher subgroups you are going to examine and then gather the following information for each subgroup:

- What are the numbers and percentages of teachers in each identified subgroup?
- How does each subgroup fare on the various teacher characteristic measures?
- Have the standings of each subgroup on those measures changed over time?

Another teacher distribution issue is out-of-field teaching—teachers placed in teaching assignments with minimal training in the related subject matter. The *Out-of-Field Teaching Memo* in CD-ROM **Tools** addresses this issue.

Teacher Flow

The teacher flow lens will help you gather information on teachers entering and leaving the district, or moving from one school to another within the district. For example, the district might report an average teacher turnover rate of 22 percent. However, upon deeper analysis, you might find that teacher turnover rates in low-income schools are 45 percent and that the teachers leaving those schools are those with the most experience.

Keep in mind that raw turnover statistics won't necessarily tell the whole story—a short spell of high turnover rates could be due to teacher retirements or to termination of ineffective teachers. Though statistics can illuminate potential trouble spots, more information is often required to get to the underlying issues.

The teacher flow lens chart lists three subgroups—teachers entering, teachers exiting, teachers making other decisions—to be examined through the teacher flow lens. The following questions will help you identify possible areas of action to be incorporated into the TQI planning stage:

- What are the numbers and percentages of individuals in each subgroup for the district as a whole? For each school in the district?
- How does each subgroup fare on the various teacher characteristic measures?
- How have each subgroup's standings on those measures changed over time?
- Why are teachers leaving the district before retirement or moving within the system? What are characteristics of the jobs they are taking elsewhere: pay scales, demographics, performance levels?
- For teachers moving within the system, do any patterns underlie their movement? Are teachers moving from one subgroup of schools to another?

The amount of teacher data to be disaggregated may seem overwhelming. Indeed, the task of identifying, collecting, and analyzing this data can be daunting, frustrating, and politically charged. Therefore, consider seeking expert assistance from a consulting firm or from a local university to help you with this important aspect of the initiative.

1 TEACHER DATA FRAMEWORK: THE BIG PICTURE

CATEGORY	INDICATOR
Academic Competence	▪ **Scores on tests of verbal ability** ▪ **Scores on state licensing exams** ▪ **Completion of a major** ▪ **Completion of a minor** ▪ **Possession of a master's degree or higher (disaggregated by type of degree, subject area of degree, other criteria)** ▪ Scores on tests of subject matter knowledge ▪ Graduate coursework completed
Practical Competence	▪ **Possession of National Board certification** ▪ Scores on tests of professional/pedagogical knowledge
Professional Achievement	▪ **Possession of certification** ▪ Possession of alternative certification in primary or other teaching assignments ▪ Level attained on state/district/school career ladders
Performance	▪ **Value-added contributions to student academic gains** ▪ Evaluations by supervisors, peers, parents, students, graduates/former students ▪ Receipt of awards, fellowships, grants ▪ School/district leadership positions ▪ Absenteeism
Basic Information	▪ **Gender** ▪ **Age** ▪ **Race** ▪ **Years of experience in teaching** ▪ **Grade level(s) taught** ▪ **Subject matter taught**
Other Indicators	▪ **Salary** ▪ Years of experience in current school ▪ Teacher satisfaction with parent support, school environment, etc.

Note: *PEN recommends giving priority to the indicators listed in bold.*

2 TEACHER DATA FRAMEWORK: TEACHER DISTRIBUTION LENS

- **Teachers at schools with higher/lower performance levels on official assessments**
- **Teachers at schools with higher/lower percentages of minority students**
- **Teachers at schools with higher/lower percentages of students eligible for free/reduced-price lunches**
- Teachers at special category schools such as magnet schools, charter schools, alternative schools
- Teachers of subpopulations of students: special needs, gifted and talented, limited English proficiency, advanced placement, remedial, vocational

Note: *PEN recommends giving priority to the ways of looking at subgroups indicated in bold.*

3 TEACHER DATA FRAMEWORK: TEACHER FLOW LENS

TEACHERS *ENTERING* THE SCHOOL SYSTEM	TEACHERS *EXITING* THE SCHOOL SYSTEM	TEACHERS MAKING OTHER DECISIONS
▪ Applying for teaching positions ▪ Offered teaching jobs ▪ **Accepting teaching positions** ▪ Accepting teaching positions, holding alternative certification	▪ **Teaching in another district** ▪ **Taking an administrative post** ▪ **Leaving the teaching profession/leaving within three years of starting** ▪ **Retiring** ▪ **Terminated or dismissed** ▪ Leaving voluntarily, holding alternative certification ▪ Terminated or dismissed, holding alternative certification	▪ Individuals completing local certification programs but opting *not* to teach ▪ Substitute teachers ▪ **Teachers assigned to positions in subject areas they are not certified in**

Note: *PEN recommends giving priority to the ways of looking at subgroups indicated in bold.*

With a well-conceived plan, the advice and resources in this guide, community relationships, and the help of experts where indicated, you will be able to successfully tackle the data identification, collection, and analysis process. The following sections of the guide offer guidance on the steps and challenges involved.

Identifying and Collecting Teacher Data

The *Teacher Data Framework* offers a solid basis for data collection. How communities use the framework will vary according to objectives. TQI partners focusing on a research component may identify and collect a significant body of teacher data *before* presenting it to the community. TQI partners focusing on community engagement may choose to identify a few teacher characteristics and *then* work with community members to select a broader set of indicators.

Use of the framework can also vary due to external circumstances outside your control. For example, you may find that you cannot collect all the data you want according to the original timeline because it is not readily available from the district. Tailor the use of the framework to your situation by viewing the process in phases.

Phase One: Initial Data Identification and Collection

To launch your TQI, you will need information on the state of teacher quality in your community. Which indicators and how many you choose to work with in the first phase of your TQI will depend on your objectives: Is your TQI designed to collect data about a specific aspect of teacher quality, and will you use this data to inform the community? Is your TQI designed to engage the community in making teacher quality a priority issue, and will you work collaboratively with community partners to identify specific TQ issues through data collection?

Though every teacher quality initiative involves research and engagement, the emphasis you place on one component or the other will determine how much data is collected in the early TQI stages. If your initiative is geared to specific teacher quality issues, it is better to have a solid body of information about those issues before approaching the wider community. This base of information gives your initiative a focus from the outset, and can be further enhanced with input from the community as the initiative progresses. In addition, reliable fact-based research raises your credibility on teacher quality issues in the eyes of potential partners and other community organizations.

If your initiative is centered on improving the quality of teaching in general, with an emphasis on engaging community members in teacher quality issues, then you may not spend much time gathering preliminary data. Rather, data will be collected after the community determines which teacher quality issues are most important. In either instance, the data collected in phase one should satisfy the following criteria:

- It provides information about teacher characteristic indicators.
- It supports a persuasive reason for further examination of teacher quality.
- It addresses an issue in which the community has demonstrated interest.
- It comes from a reputable source and tells a story of interest to the whole community.
- It can be obtained and analyzed within a reasonable time frame.

Phase Two: Data Identification and Collection with Community Input and Assistance

In the first phase of data collection, information that gives focus to the TQI is shared with the public. The community then has an opportunity to digest, comment on, dispute, and add to the information. Ways to bring information to the public's attention are discussed later in this chapter.

Once the community gives input, you are ready to begin the second phase of data collection. This second phase presents an opportunity to supplement quantitative data (numbers and statistics) with qualitative data (surveys, interviews, stories) to arrive at a more complete picture of specific teacher quality issues.

See *Focus Group/Interview Questions* in CD-ROM **Tools** for ways to gather this type of information.

In some instances, phase two will be extensive and time consuming; in others, it will be a final polishing of the comprehensive body of information collected in phase one. The scenario applicable to your TQI will depend on the emphasis of your initiative and how much you choose to involve others in the identification, collection, and analysis of the data. Data collected in phase two should satisfy the following criteria:

- It reflects issues in which the community has expressed interest during the public engagement process.
- It is data the initiative partners did not have the time, expertise, or relationships to collect or analyze during phase one.
- It provides a comprehensive picture of teacher quality in the community when combined with data collected in phase one.

While local circumstances must be considered in determining the role of the community, PEN urges you to find active roles for members of your community in the TQI. This work is about building civic capacity, and people become more invested in a project if they are personally involved. If their involvement is primarily passive—listening to facts and figures reported at a meeting—and they see no opportunity to take action, they could easily perceive the TQI as an organizational project rather than a broad public effort.

Consequently, those outside the core planning group will not feel any ownership of the initiative or any commitment to work for change. An endeavor that lacks community interest and involvement is unlikely to gain support from influential decision makers or become a sustainable force for change.

Sources and Methods for Collecting Teacher Data

Data Sources

Now that you have an idea of *what* data to collect, you need to think about *where* to find the information. Often, the best place to start is the central office of your local school district. If data related to the big picture, teacher distribution, and teacher flow has been collected in one place, the district office is the place most likely to have it.

Unfortunately, it is likely the data you want is not stored in a centralized location. Information, especially in large districts, may be stored in various divisions of the district office, such as the human resource or licensure divisions. Some information might be found only in the personnel files of individual teachers.

See **Tips** (p. 43) for a description of possible data sources, including identification of relevant divisions within a typical state department of education.

Most school districts, however, do collect the information you want—it just may not be readily available. In addition to the district office, there are a number of other places where you might find teacher data:

- State departments of education
- Education committees of state legislatures
- National government databases, such as the one housed at the National Center for Education Statistics
- Nonprofit organizations, university research centers, and think tanks
- Teachers

Data Availability

Data availability is a logistical and political issue. Concerning logistics, districts traditionally have not collected teacher data in readily accessible formats since the importance of teacher quality has only recently emerged as a highly publicized issue.

With regard to political concerns, district leaders are naturally reluctant to release data that will cast the district in a bad light. They also may be apprehensive about violating teachers' privacy. Or, they may not want to burden an already overworked staff with compiling data in a usable format. Whatever the reason, districts will be under pressure to collect this type of data under NCLB regulations. You may find yourself seeking a service that the district needs to do, and if you can help them, it might make the data easier to obtain.

If you encounter resistance, try to identify specific concerns. This will put you in a better position to address the issues productively.

See **Tips** (p. 42) for suggestions on how to work with district and union leaders to build the trust needed to tackle these issues.

You will have to come to terms with district leaders on these key issues:

- What data is available?
- Where is the data stored?
- How accessible is the data? In what format—electronic, paper, other—is it stored? Who has access to the data?
- What procedures must be followed to ensure confidentiality of individual teacher information?
- What roles can the district and the initiative partners play in data collection and analysis, and how will these roles be portrayed publicly?
- How will the data be used and/or disseminated?

Data Collection Methods

How you gather information will depend on the type of information you want to collect, the availability of the data, the resources available for data collection, and the role of community members in the initiative. Your data collection efforts should satisfy the following criteria:

- Both quantitative and qualitative data are collected. Though quantitative data is easier to capture and summarize, qualitative data—by recording how teachers operate in the classroom, interact with students, and feel about teaching—will help you develop a more complete picture of the quality of teaching in your community.
- The data informs, and is informed by, the community. While you should gather enough initial information to serve as a catalyst for community discussion, further data collection should take into account what the public wants to know about teacher quality.
- The collection process is participatory. Whenever possible, the community should have a role in gathering information about teacher characteristics, particularly qualitative information. Parent teams, for example, could observe teachers in the classrooms. Community members could conduct interviews and focus groups. The central office and the teachers unions can and should play a significant role in planning data collection efforts; without their support, it will be difficult to gather information from district administrative personnel or from teachers.

Some date collection strategies, described in greater detail on pages 44–45 in **Tips**, follow:

- Collect relevant data from established sources.
- Sample subsets of relevant data from established sources.
- Use expert research assistance where indicated.
- Survey teachers.
- Conduct teacher interviews and focus groups.
- Observe teachers in the classroom.

Also, see *Focus Group/Interview Questions* in CD-ROM **Tools**.

Data Collection Challenges

Trying to retrieve data in a usable format from district, state, and other sources can be a frustrating process.

See **Tips** (pp. 45–47) for ways to address the following common data collection challenges:

- The district/state does not collect the desired data.
- The district is reluctant to share data because of confidentiality concerns.
- The district is reluctant to share information that casts it in a negative light.
- The data is not available in a readily accessible format.
- The data is available only for some teachers and some schools.
- District and/or union leaders are unwilling to cooperate with the initiative.

Analyzing Teacher Data

Understanding the Process

Once you have identified and collected the teacher data needed for this stage of the initiative, it is time to examine the information through the three framework lenses—the big picture, distribution, and flow—discussed earlier.

The thought of analyzing data may be intimidating, but no advanced statistical skills are required. For the purpose of the TQI, you are not trying to demonstrate causal relationships—e.g., that teachers with lower verbal scores produce less student achievement gains than teachers with higher verbal scores; that *would* require knowledge of statistical methodology. Rather, your task is to discover whether schools or programs in your district are staffed by teachers with differing characteristics, and the only skill you need to do that is the ability to calculate averages. Other research can be used to illustrate how these differences might affect teacher quality.

Still, this does not mean that analyzing data is easy. You may not have enough resources—time, staff capacity, money—to do data analysis. You may not feel you have the skills for data analysis. Furthermore, inputting data is time consuming and demands great attention to detail. You will need to consider the costs/benefit factors of outsourcing the data input and analysis functions to a research organization or local university.

See **Tips** (pp. 45–47) for ways to address the following data analysis challenges:

- How accessible is the data? How long it will take to collect and analyze it?
- Does your staff have the time and skills to undertake the task? Are there resources available to help them build their capacity to perform data analysis?
- What will it cost to have an external organization perform some or all of the data analysis?
- Are there other organizations with the capacity and willingness to perform some or all of the analysis?
- Can some of the analysis be done in-house and the rest outsourced?

MAINTOWN, USA

Collecting Information

The Maintown Teacher Quality Task Force created a data collection subcommittee to gather the information the task force needs. Dr. Joanne Bailey, a skilled researcher from the local university, was appointed an advisor to the subcommittee. She brought several graduate students on board to help with data collection and analysis.

Using PEN's *Teacher Data Framework*, the subcommittee identified some key measures related to the initiative's teacher quality indicators—namely, the percentage of experienced, highly qualified teachers at low-performing schools.

The subcommittee decided to focus on those teacher characteristics that research indicates have an effect on student learning: verbal ability, subject matter knowledge, experience level, scores on state licensing exams, possession of a master's degree, and appropriate certification. The subcommittee also wanted data on teacher attitudes and turnover rates since staff morale tends to be low and turnover high at high-poverty schools.

Dr. Bailey outlined these measures in a memo to Frank James, the district's human resources director, who agreed to meet and discuss the data issues. At that meeting, James provided the committee with school-by-school data on turnover rates and the experience levels of teachers. However, he was skeptical that the committee would be able to gather all the data it wanted and raised a number of concerns:

- The district does not collect any information on teacher attitudes.
- The district has information on teachers' verbal abilities and licensure scores but keeps this information in individual personnel files; thus, it cannot be readily analyzed.
- The district does have analyzable data sets on certification, master's degrees, and in-field status. But Frances Hart, the district superintendent, is worried that if the data reveals inequities in teacher distribution, the resulting community outcry would impede initiative progress.

After a month of negotiations that included Dr. Hart, the district agreed to work with the task force to develop and administer a morale survey to a sample group of teachers. In addition, the task force agreed to provide the district with funds to examine 20 percent of the personnel files and gather teacher test score data, which would be reported to the task force in the form of school-wide averages to preserve confidentiality.

Dr. Hart remained concerned about the public response to the release of school-by-school information on teachers. To gain her cooperation, the task force agreed not to publish a planned "Teacher Quality Report Card." Instead, the task force would share the information at meetings and focus group sessions. In other communications, the task force would identify issues and trends, but not list school-by-school teacher data.

The task force sees this as a short-term compromise and hopes to persuade the district to make information about teachers more widely available in the future.

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Collecting and analyzing data—albeit an enormous task—is still only two-thirds of the job. Data is just a set of numbers until it is used to create meaning, develop new knowledge, and applied to a purpose. The next section of this guide will help you use data collection and analysis to identify an issue worthy of continued effort.

Refining Your Vision

Chapter One of this guide focused on the need to create a vision of quality teaching early in the TQI process, but also cautioned that a detailed delineation of teacher quality goals would be premature. However, now that you have dedicated significant resources to data collection and community engagement, it is time to refine your initial vision and take the next step toward your objective. The following considerations can help you refine your vision:

- What specific changes do we hope to see in the characteristics, distribution, and/or flow of teachers in the district as a result of our strategy?
- Over what time frame would we like these changes to occur?
- What effect do we want these changes to have on the structure or processes of the school district?
- Is there a specific population or school that we want to target?

Prioritizing Teacher Quality Issues

With your TQI vision as a guide, work with the community to review the collected information and determine the most pressing teacher quality issues. Prioritizing one or two issues will improve the chances of a successful TQI by focusing your available resources. The following questions can help you identify your priorities:

- What TQ issues are of greatest concern to the community now?
- What TQ issues most greatly affect student achievement?
- What TQ issues are having serious negative effects on the district?
- What are some cost-effective teacher quality improvements that could make a real difference but are relatively low cost in terms of dollars and staff effort?
- What TQ issues have a good chance of being resolved within a reasonable time frame given our capacity and the current external environment?
- What TQ improvements can be sustained over the long term?

Also, see *Initiative Priorities* in CD-ROM **Tools**.

MAINTOWN, USA

Prioritizing Teacher Quality Needs and Setting Goals

The Maintown Teacher Quality Task Force has held numerous meetings and conducted several focus groups during the six-month "needs assessment" phase of the project.

With teacher data collected from the central office, the task force discovered that while the district's average annual teacher turnover rate was 22 percent, some schools were experiencing rates as high as 45 percent, with low-performing schools having the highest turnover rates. In addition, through interviews with district administrators, principals, and teachers, the task force found that teacher turnover was costing the district a great deal of money and was having a negative effect on school culture.

This information was presented to community members, who were struck by the difference in qualifications of teachers working in low-performing schools versus those of teachers working in high-performing schools. They were also troubled by the high turnover rate of teachers working in high-needs schools.

Given the data and community feedback, the task force decided to focus its TQI on teacher turnover in low-performing schools. While this was not the issue identified during the TQI planning stage, it is aligned with the vision of ensuring that high-needs students are taught by highly qualified teachers. The task force knew from the beginning that its vision and goals would be refined through research and community input.

After establishing a priority focus, the task force worked to uncover community expectations regarding turnover rates. After more research and further discussion with community representatives, the task force set an overall 12 percent turnover rate as a district goal, with no school experiencing more than a 19 percent turnover rate. However, since low teacher turnover was not a worthwhile goal if the teachers who stayed were not highly qualified, the group also agreed to develop strategies to retain good teachers.

Next, the task force revised components of the TQI plan to reflect community perceptions of teacher quality, the new teacher quality goals that had been established, and the new TQ indicators and benchmarks relating to those goals.

The task force members are now in a position to identify specific actions that must be taken to reduce teacher turnover. But first they must determine what factors contribute to teacher turnover and what strategy will facilitate improved teacher retention. A strategy planning session is scheduled for the following week.

Transitioning from "What" to "Why"

The data you have collected so far should provide you with a snapshot of teacher characteristics in your school district—a good look at the "what" of teacher quality. Now you have to explore the "why" of teacher quality—the factors, conditions, policies, and practices underlying the data you have collected.

The explanatory stage of data collection will help you arrive at possible avenues for change and further refine your goals. PEN's *External Factors Framework* can help you determine what elements of the external environment directly or indirectly affect your teacher quality issue. The framework can also help you develop a teacher quality needs assessment.

Identifying and Using Data to Plan Initiative Actions

Using the External Factors Framework

There are two categories of external factors—factors other than a teacher's skills, experience, and traits—that will influence the quality of teaching in your district: (1) the structures, processes, and culture of the education system and (2) the expectations and support of the community.

These categories include multiple indicators you can use to examine possible causes of the teacher quality challenge your community is facing. You may want to begin by considering all factors with a direct or indirect impact. Ultimately, however, you should focus on those factors most likely to have a positive effect on your priority issue, and most likely to respond to change efforts within a reasonable period of time.

What follows is a brief description of the two categories of external factors and a list of indicator categories used in the framework.

See CD-ROM **Tools** for a copy of the *External Factors Framework* and a list of guiding questions and specific indicators for each section of the framework.

Education system structures, processes, and culture

Teachers bring a host of skills, experiences, and characteristics into the classroom that shape the way they instruct, manage, and relate to their students.

School policies and school environments also affect what goes on in the classroom. Teachers are usually required to teach from certain textbooks and encouraged to use certain instructional strategies. Their access to resources, training, and planning time is often dictated by policies and budget allocations that are outside their control and the control of the schools in which they teach.

At a broader level, teacher quality is affected by district-level decisions on teacher hiring, assignments, and compensation. In analyzing your TQ issue, recognize there are influencing factors that go beyond the characteristics of individual teachers.

The following indicators provide a menu of education system factors that affect teacher quality in general and may affect your TQ issue as well:

- District leadership
- School accountability systems
- Induction/early professional development
- Information sharing/public communication
- Ongoing professional development
- State approval of teacher preparation programs
- Teacher licensure/certification
- Compensation
- Recruitment
- Resource allocation and use
- Teacher placement
- Work environment
- Hiring
- Evaluation

Community expectations and support

In addition to state and district policies that affect what goes on in the classroom, other organizations and the community at large also affect the quality of teaching.

Some of these influences are readily apparent: The training that colleges provide to pre-service teachers certainly has an impact on a teacher's future classroom career. Other community influences are less apparent: Families, for example, don't always consider how important their role is in regard to the overall quality of teaching. Making sure that kids come to school ready to learn, responding to teacher requests, and generating a positive attitude toward school are ways families can and should support what takes place in the classroom.

Other people and organizations can support the quality of teaching by becoming involved in public decision-making processes, donating time and resources, voting in school board elections, supporting education-related legislation, and promoting the positive aspects of the school system.

The following indicators listed in the *External Factors Framework* in CD-ROM **Tools** provide a menu of community factors that affect teacher quality in general and could affect your TQ issue as well:

- Business involvement
- Community organization involvement
- Parent involvement
- Teachers unions
- College/university programs
- Media coverage
- Public awareness/involvement
- School board

Identifying external factors

With the help of the questions in the *External Factors Framework*, determine which environmental factors will have the greatest impact on your teacher quality issue.

- Which factors have a direct, demonstrated relationship to our TQ priority?
- Which factors are of concern to the community?
- Which factors do we, or our initiative partners, have the capacity to change?
- Which factors offer the greatest possibility for successful, sustainable change, given the presumed level of support from decision makers and influencers?
- Which factors offer the most feasible paths toward change, given environmental factors such as state and district budgets, political climate, and public perception?

Anticipating Data Collection Issues

Most of the data collection processes described in the *External Factors Framework* involve gathering descriptive information rather than collecting statistics, though some external factor indicators do involve statistics.

This does not mean that this round of data collection will be easy. Districts or organizations may be reluctant to share certain types of information; the desired information may not be available; and the data might be housed in any one of a dozen departments.

You may even face an additional challenge at this stage, one of perception. For example, some businesses may see educating students as solely the responsibility of schools. They may not realize, for example, that by not asking for student transcripts when hiring, they are eliminating a significant incentive for students to do well and, in doing so, they are not supporting an environment where quality teaching can take place.

Therefore, you must be prepared to make the case for the community's role in improving the quality of teaching by asking employers to reflect on how much they spend on retraining high school graduates, by asking the media to reflect on how many stories focus on education, and by asking citizens to reflect on how often they vote in school board elections.

Determining the Status of External Factors in the Community

Determining the status of a factor or condition related to your TQ issue will depend on the extent of existing information and on the factor itself. If you already have access to exit surveys indicating that district residency requirements greatly contribute to teachers' decisions to leave, it becomes relatively simple to learn about those residency requirements and compile existing data.

If, however, exit surveys indicate that "working conditions" are what most teachers cite as their reason for leaving, you will have to determine (1) what constitutes working conditions and (2) the state of those working conditions.

MAINTOWN, USA

Identifying Relevant External Factors

At their strategy meeting, the task force members used the *External Factors Framework* to identify external factors that might affect teacher retention in high-needs schools. Each task force member reviewed the 21 categories of education system and community variables listed in the framework and selected the 5 or 6 categories most relevant to teacher retention, and most likely to garner community support as possible areas for change.

Ed Schmidt, a discussion facilitator, led the group in selecting the 6 categories that will be presented to a larger group of stakeholders: accountability system, teacher placement, compensation, district leadership, work environment, and parent involvement.

The task force then held a "concerned stakeholders" meeting, inviting those who participated in the community focus groups held earlier and who had expressed a desire to become more deeply involved in the TQI process. During the meeting, the task force presented the categories along with reasons for and against focusing the TQI on any particular category at this time.

Task force members and individuals representing the stakeholder group formed teams. Each team chose a category for further study, to include examination of literature reviews of national research, teacher exit surveys, and focus group findings relative to their categories.

The teams examining compensation and working conditions made presentations to the group and recommended that these issues warranted further consideration.

The group then reviewed the framework questions to further refine the categories that had been selected. In doing so, the members learned that some studies have indicated that it would take a significant increase in compensation to persuade teachers to stay at high-poverty, low-performing schools. They also noted that the state and the district were facing significant budget shortfalls. Armed with this information, the group decided that increasing compensation did not present the best chance of success for their TQI.

The group also realized that many factors fell under the working conditions category, including compensation restructuring. They concluded that more research and prioritizing were needed.

You would have to know specifics about the working conditions that are causing teachers to leave before you could devise an improvement strategy. And getting more detailed information may require more research, more interviews, and more site observations. Use your best judgment in determining how much information is needed to craft a targeted, effective improvement strategy.

See Chapter Four: *Putting Things in Motion* (p. 65) and the *Strategy Planner* in CD-ROM **Tools** for guidance in creating a TQI strategy.

The energy, time, and resources expended in collecting data—and in making it meaningful—are daunting. But without data as the backbone of your decision making and community action planning, you could end up trying to implement a flawed strategy and lose your credibility in the process.

Organizations that take the time to collect and use data as the basis for their change initiatives build credibility with community leaders looking for fact-based, reliable information. These data organizations become go-to information sources on education issues. As a result, they are able to do deeper community work and attract more funding from foundations and other sources.

TIPS

TIP: Selecting Assessment Indicators

Even though PEN's data framework lays out a fairly comprehensive set of teacher quality indicators, you should feel free to select other indicators appropriate for your TQI.

Indicators should always reflect the vision, values, objectives, and scope of your work. For guidance in selecting indicators, consider these questions from the Harvard Family Research Project:

- Will this indicator help you learn something about the expected result or condition?
- Is the indicator defined in the same way over time? Has the data for the indicator been collected in the same way over time?
- Is data available for the indicator?
- Is data currently being collected? If not, can cost-effective instruments for data collection be developed?
- Is this indicator important to most people? Will this indicator provide sufficient information about a condition or result to convince both supporters and skeptics?
- Is the indicator data quantitative?

TIP: Building Trust in Data Collection

There are a number of steps you can take to build the trust of district and union leaders in the data collection process:

- Prepare a well-thought-out, flexible research plan for discussion with district administrators; some districts require formal, district-approved research plans if an initiative includes school system interviews or use of certain data.
- Fully explore district and union concerns. Privacy issues regarding teacher data may be related to the desire for confidentiality and the fear of negative publicity about teaching qualifications. Ask probing questions to get at the root cause of the concerns; being explicit allows everyone to know exactly what the issues are, and what can be done to obtain the information while respecting the concerns.
- Use a neutral third party to facilitate discussions.
- Put any agreements in writing.
- "Say what you do and do what you say." In other words, communicate openly and regularly and consistently carry out agreed-upon actions.
- Assign a designated contact person to work with district and union leaders.
- Make initiative actions as transparent as possible to the district/union.
- Work with district/union leaders to come up with long-term solutions for deficiencies in the data infrastructure.

TIP: Non-District Sources of Data

State departments of education. State education departments can be a good source of information, even though the data they collect may not be disaggregated at the teacher or school level. As with districts, states frequently house data in different divisions. A study of six southeastern states found teacher data housed in the following state education department divisions:[6]

- Licensing divisions
- Computer services/information technology/management information systems offices
- Finance divisions
- Human resource divisions
- School approval divisions

Consequently, you will most likely need to devote a fair amount of time to tracking down information. State departments of education may also share the districts' reluctance to make available teacher information due to concerns about publicity, privacy, and added work. Be prepared to face similar data collection issues with state education departments as you did with district offices.

State legislature education committees. You may be able to use information gathered by the education committee of your state legislature. Determine which government agencies or committees monitor school quality.

National government databases. If you want to compare local averages to national and state averages, or to become more familiar with teacher characteristics, check out the US Department of Education's resources in *General Education Resources* (p. 73) in **Resources.**

Nonprofits/universities/think tanks/education journals. Many non-governmental organizations track a wide variety of teacher quality issues at the national or state level. Some organizations conduct studies, some advocate certain policies, and some do both. Though they may have good information and insight, they may also have a subjective perspective. When tapping these resources, keep in mind that their information may be slanted to support certain ideological positions. For a list of non-governmental organizations that focus on teacher quality issues, see *General Education Resources* (p. 73) in **Resources.**

Direct collection. Teachers themselves are another potential source of teacher data. Direct collection usually requires more negotiation with district and union leaders, and more effort and resources from you. But it also yields data in the desired format, since you design or oversee the design of the data collection instrument.

In addition, direct collection can provide opportunities to actively engage community members in the initiative. See Chapter Three **Tips** (p. 56) for ways to involve community members in public action.

TIP: Data Collection Methods

Collecting relevant data from established sources. In an ideal world, you and your partners would be able to collect all the information you need, in user-friendly formats, from both the district and the state.

Realistically, most districts and states will not have collected all the information you need or stored it in easily accessible formats. In addition, neither you nor your partners are likely to have enough resources to collect and analyze information for every teacher and every school, especially if the information is available only on paper.

However, most districts and states should have collected *some* data in a user-friendly format. Discovering the overlap between data desired and data collected, as well as where the data is stored, are matters to discuss with the district and state leadership.

Sampling subsets of relevant data. Some teacher data may be available only in paper records. Various other constraints can also make data collection difficult.

It may make sense, therefore, to limit your data collection efforts to a subset of district teachers—a random sample representative of the district's teachers—or to a subset of schools in the highest and lowest performance categories. If you opt to sample data subsets, you will need some knowledge of statistics to determine the sample size and sampling strategies of a representative sample.

Using teacher surveys. For some indicator data, it may be necessary to ask the district to help collect new information from teachers. Alternatively, you can distribute teacher surveys designed by you and your partners.

Response rates on teacher surveys will vary greatly depending on how safe teachers feel in participating and how convenient you make it for them to participate. Work with the central office and the union to make sure they will support your survey and present it positively to teachers. Design the survey so that individual teachers cannot be identified and make sure teachers are aware of this confidentiality protection. Keep the burden on teachers to a minimum: A short questionnaire that can be answered online is one way to increase the likelihood that teachers will complete the survey. See *Online Tools* (pp. 80–81) in **Resources** for software programs that allow you to survey and tabulate responses online.

Conducting teacher interviews and focus groups. Getting the full story on the quality of teaching in your community requires both quantitative and qualitative information. Teacher

interviews and focus groups are good sources of qualitative information. Not only will they help round out the picture of what characteristics teachers bring to the classroom, but also they will provide information about indicators, such as working conditions, that affect teacher quality (see Chapter Four, *Putting Things in Motion*, for more details). ***Note:*** It is important that all interviewers and focus group facilitators have the same training and use the same procedures so that the resulting responses are comparable. See *Focus Group/Interview Questions* in CD-ROM **Tools** for a sample set of questions.

Observing teachers in the classroom. Another way to collect information on teacher characteristics is to sit in a classroom and watch what happens. This is a particularly good way to get parents involved in the initiative since it brings home, in very concrete terms, how the education their child is receiving differs from the education other children are receiving. It also captures those "I know it when I see it" characteristics that may not be easily quantifiable but certainly impact how much students learn in the classroom. Again, people who are going to be classroom observers need guidelines and training so that comparisons can be made among classroom observation groups. See *Standards and Evaluation* (p. 74) in **Resources** for ways to conduct classroom observations.

TIP: Addressing Data Collection and Analysis Issues

CHALLENGE	OPTIONS
The district/state does not collect data for your indicators.	If the data for your indicator is not kept by the district/state, you have several options: First, ask the district/state if any university, research institution, or other organization has the relevant data. Second, work with the district and union to design a data collection instrument for the information you need. While these options may solve the data gap for the initiative, the district should be tracking such important data. Therefore, a third, more sustainable solution would be to use the initiative as a catalyst to encourage the district to monitor teacher characteristics in the future. TQI members could work with the district and union to decide what data to collect and how to collect it. The district may have had valid reasons for not collecting the information in the past, so point out some cost-saving benefits of having the data on hand in the future such as more effective/efficient decisions with regard to human resources, which typically account for 80 percent or more of a school's budget.

TIPS

CHALLENGE	OPTIONS
The data is available only for some teachers and some schools.	If the desired indicator data is available only for certain subpopulations, assess whether there is enough data for a representative sample or enough to compare the most pertinent subgroups. If you cannot find enough data, or are unable to determine whether your sample size is large enough, consider collecting the information directly from teachers.
The data is not available in a readily accessible format.	If the data is in a hard-to-access format that would be time consuming to sort through, you will have to decide if/how to utilize the data. ▪ How important is this data in determining teacher quality? ▪ Are there sampling methods that could be used to shorten the collection time? ▪ Are there other sources that might have this data? ▪ Would the district be willing to share the data collection effort? ▪ Can you call upon other sources —community organizations, university researchers, volunteers—to help input data? ▪ Would it be less time consuming, as well as more feasible and acceptable to district/union leaders, to recollect the data directly from teachers through an online survey?
The district is reluctant to share information that casts it in a negative light.	You should never agree *not* to reveal unflattering information. However, you can and should work with the district and the union so that the initiative is seen as the district working to put its house in order, rather than the district being subject to an external inspection. You can also work with district/union leaders to craft language that offers constructive criticism rather than condemnation.
District/union leaders are unwilling to cooperate with the initiative.	There will be instances when the district/union refuses to cooperate. If the district does not cooperate, you will have a difficult time getting access to data. However, the information may be available through other sources such as state departments of education, documents in the public record, and university or think tank research.

CHALLENGE	OPTIONS
District/union leaders are unwilling to cooperate with the initiative.	If district leaders refuse to collaborate, you can try several tactics—some designed to go around them and others designed to persuade them to give you access to the information: ▪ Revisit the *Community Asset Map* (see CD-ROM **Tools**); review where the de facto power lies in your community and who your potential allies might be. You may discover leverage points that can advance the TQI process. ▪ Focus on policies/practices that don't require district-held data. As a general rule, it is preferable to have data that *demonstrates* the policy/practice in question is detrimental to education. ▪ Wait for the district/union leadership to change—especially if the leaders are in the latter years of tenure. ▪ Mobilize community members to use letters to the editor/op-eds, school board meetings, and other public forums to pressure the district to release information. ▪ Use legal means to compel the district to release information under freedom of information laws. An adversarial relationship with the school system is not ideal. However, sometimes in the right circumstances it could actually strengthen your hand. A deeply engaged, frustrated-with-the-system community is a powerful force for change.
There are few data analysis resources, and/or TQI partners do not feel comfortable performing the data analysis themselves.	If you and your partners do not have the time, resources, or expertise to perform data analysis, consider low-cost options for distributing the work or having other groups do the analysis: ▪ Contact area colleges/universities to find undergraduate or graduate students willing to perform the analysis. Graduate students are often called upon to do original data work for class projects and may be searching for an opportunity such as the one presented by your TQI. ▪ Divide up the analysis work among other community organizations. ▪ Seek grant funding, or find a research organization willing to offer data analysis services at a lesser fee, perhaps in exchange for services you or your partners could provide.

THREE

Engaging the Community

Chapter Highlights

- Articulating concrete purposes for engaging in a TQI
- Recognizing factors that help/hinder community participation
- Identifying community groups that have worked on/have an interest in teacher quality or other education issues
- Identifying demographic characteristics that influence how specific groups might perceive teacher quality and/or how they might respond to engagement strategies
- Using engagement strategies for different community segments and different types of engagement
- Assessing and revising community engagement strategies and goals

Chapter Tips

- Identifying and Working with Other Community Initiatives
- Community Engagement Goals—TQI Partner Perspective
- Community Engagement Goals—Community Perspective
- Identifying Community Demographic Characteristics
- Planning and Facilitating Community Dialogue

Chapter Tools

- Focus Group/Interview Questions
- Evaluation Planner
- Community Asset Map: Gauging the Climate for Reform, Scanning Decision Makers and Influencers, Stakeholder Analysis

Facilitating Opportunities and Identifying Incentives for Community Involvement

If knowledge is power, then the information in the preceding chapters should help you build your community's power.

However, even a community knowledgeable about the quality of teaching in its school system—and about the various contributing factors—is not necessarily in a position to effect change. Community members must also recognize the need for change and believe their efforts can make a difference.

This chapter will help you gain an understanding of community *incentives* for involvement as well as recognize or create *opportunities* for public action.

Making a Difference Through Strategic Engagement

For many community organizations, public engagement is an integral part of their work. But engaging the community cannot be viewed as an unquestioned good. Failure to carefully consider who you are trying to engage—and for what purpose—can lead to uncoordinated action, unfocused goals, and, ultimately, lots of talk but no concrete results. Furthermore, if you want to engage the community in projects that transcend the scope and time frame of the TQI, it is important to think about what makes community engagement valuable and how to create the conditions for success.

Successful community engagement must be viewed from two perspectives: that of the TQI partners and that of the public you seek to engage. Both perspectives must be considered to create a sustainable, inclusive, effective engagement strategy.

TQI Partner Perspective

A successful community engagement process from a TQI partner perspective will meet the following criteria:

- Elicits involvement from many and varied groups
- Sustains interest and involvement
- Helps the community recognize its power
- Inspires community action
- Achieves concrete results

Most people would agree that those goals are valuable in and of themselves, but unless you can achieve concrete results, your efforts are akin to building a bridge that goes nowhere. How can you make sure your community engagement strategy not only *builds* but also *uses* the bridge? Experienced community organizers point to these common elements:

- Community engagement is a core initiative component.
- Community engagement is integrated into planning and implementation, not treated as a stand-alone component.
- Concrete community engagement benchmarks and goals are established.
- Progress toward meeting benchmarks and goals is continually assessed.
- Specific tasks, staff, and resources are identified and dedicated to community engagement work.
- Engagement strategies are tailored to community strengths.
- Emphasis is placed on *dialogue with* rather than *reporting to* community members.

See **Tips** (pp. 57–61) for ways to meet your community engagement goals that promote the characteristics identified above. See the *Evaluation Planner* in CD-ROM **Tools** for help in creating an evaluation strategy for community engagement.

Community Perspective

You will need to figure out what will motivate members of your community to participate in your initiative. What factors will encourage them to take action? What information will they need to get involved? Experience has shown that community members are more likely to participate if the following conditions are met:

- They understand the issue (knowledge).
- They feel personally committed to the issue (responsibility).
- They believe that they can do something about the issue (empowerment).
- They believe something must be done *now*, or the issue won't be resolved (urgency).
- They conclude that the benefits of involvement outweigh the costs (incentive).

Identifying the "Community"

Once you have a handle on the factors that contribute to successful engagement, you also need to identify which community members you hope to engage. Broadly speaking, community can be divided into three segments:

- Individuals
- Organized community groups
- Policymakers

Individuals. Understanding community demographics will help you determine the best way to engage individuals living in your community. How might specific segments of your community perceive teacher quality? How might they respond to different types of engagement strategies? Keep in mind the diversity of characteristics and values that comprise community segments often grouped into a single category. Categories such as Hispanic and Asian, for example, encompass a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. For demographic information on your community, check recent census data or regional economic development reports.

Organized community groups. Map out the various organized community groups in your area: civic organizations, grassroots groups, faith communities, businesses.

Policymakers. Policymakers—school board members, city/county commissioners, state legislators, mayors—usually have authority to make the changes you seek; therefore, it is important that you learn how to lobby them effectively. Without their support, it is unlikely that you will achieve your goals. Effective lobbying encompasses the following characteristics:

- Understanding of the political system
- Identification of the relevant interests and constituencies of the policymakers you will lobby
- Knowledge of current political and economic factors influencing policymaker decisions
- Collaboration with groups that influence policymakers

See the *Community Asset Map* in CD-ROM **Tools** and **Tips** (p. 56) for suggestions on how to identify and work with community groups and initiatives. See **Tips** (p. 62) for a table of demographic characteristics, the implications of those characteristics on engagement, and questions to ask members of various demographic segments. See *Scanning Decision Makers and Influencers* in CD-ROM **Tools** for help in thinking through pertinent information about various community groups.

Choosing Engagement Strategies

How you reach specific community groups will depend on what type of engagement you want to facilitate. This guide focuses on three basic aspects of engagement:

- Being aware (listening)
- Providing input (discussing)
- Taking action (doing)

Personal characteristics, such as natural reticence, intrinsic drive, and cultural norms, and external circumstances, such as job/family obligations, poverty, language skills, and lack of transportation or childcare, will influence whether or not individuals elect to become engaged in an issue. Make sure the engagement opportunities you create encourage people of differing temperaments and resources to enter the community dialogue.

Awareness. The first step in public engagement is to make sure community members are *aware* of an issue. Awareness depends on a number of factors: accessibility to information, prior experience with the issue, availability of information, and so forth. Awareness also runs the spectrum from vague familiarity to a sense of responsibility and urgency.

Communication is a key component of awareness. It should serve as an "engine"—prompting initial dialogue—rather than as a "caboose"—simply reporting what has already taken place.[7] And it must be an engine that knows its destination. You will go a long way toward making sure you share information in a way that honors stakeholder needs and perspectives if you ask, "What do community members want and need to know?" rather than, "What do we have to say?"

Build on the awareness base in your community by sharing information in a way that speaks to your audience and leads to further engagement (see Community Engagement—Ways to Create Awareness). The following set of questions can help you develop effective, stakeholder-centered communications:

- How does the targeted group get most of its education-related information?
- What obstacles—language proficiency, inconvenient meeting location, lack of childcare/transportation—might keep this group from receiving information?
- What can be done to minimize these obstacles?
- What is this group's primary language?
- To what media does this group have access (radio, TV, newspapers, Internet)?
- Do our messages use names and vocabulary familiar to the group?
- Does each message have a hook that will capture the audience's attention?
- Are our messages clear and concise?

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT—WAYS TO CREATE AWARENESS*

- Print/online newsletters
- Brochures
- Newspaper articles/ inserts
- Editorials/op-eds
- Press releases
- Postcards
- Stationery
- Business cards
- Fax publications
- Fax cover sheets
- Billboards
- Grocery bag inserts
- Fliers on pizza boxes
- Church bulletins
- Audio conferences
- Notes home with students
- Information lines
- Voicemail
- Bulletin boards
- Calendars
- Posted fliers
- Talk radio
- Public service announcements
- Videos
- Cable TV
- TV news
- Public meetings
- Press conferences
- Forums

**Adapted from Strategic Communications: Getting Started. 21st Century Community Learning Center Training Material, Fall 1999.*

Input. Opportunities for community members to express their views publicly on given issues include the following:

- Community meetings in neighborhood centers, places of worship, public buildings, private homes
- Print/phone surveys
- Focus groups
- Radio call-in shows
- Letters to the editor, to elected officials
- Testimony at city council hearings, speaking at school board meetings

Set objectives for community input sessions. You are more likely to benefit from feedback if you know in advance what it is that you want from the community:

- Perceptions of teacher quality in general and at specific schools in particular
- Specific concerns about the quality of teaching in the district and in individual schools
- A vision for what quality teaching should look like in the community
- Suggestions for ways to involve community members in the TQI
- Ideas for change within the teacher quality framework of issues
- Proposals for concrete actions to effect needed changes
- Willingness to volunteer time, personal connections, and knowledge to the TQI

See **Tips** (pp. 62–63) for community dialogue suggestions extracted from PEN's *Communities at Work: A Guidebook of Strategic Interventions for Community Change.* Also, see *Dialogue* (pp. 82–83) in **Resources** for publications that can help you design community discussions or plan focus groups. Finally, see *Focus Group/Interview Questions* in CD-ROM **Tools** for guidance on question selection and information gathering.

MAINTOWN, USA

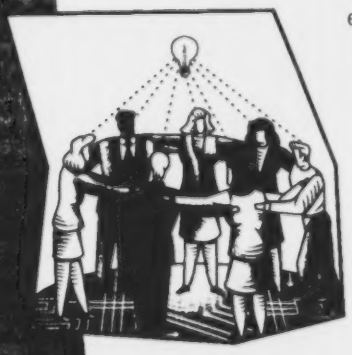
Engaging the Community

Having gathered a great deal of teacher data, the task force decided to embark on a six-month community engagement campaign designed around small group discussions and focus groups on teaching and how to improve it.

A series of house meetings, where 10 to 12 neighbors and friends gathered in someone's home, was selected as the mechanism for these conversations. Each of the 17 task force members agreed to host one or two house meetings. A total of 205 people participated in 22 house meetings in all parts of the city.

Susan Hermann, a participant trained to facilitate these gatherings, led the groups in discussing teacher quality. First, the groups talked about what they perceived a highly qualified teacher to be by drawing on their own experiences as students and parents. They also had the chance to react to research findings about what makes teachers effective. Next, Hermann presented data on the characteristics of Maintown's teachers. The groups looked for patterns in the information and quickly zeroed in on the lopsided distribution of the more experienced and credentialed teachers within the district. Furthermore, when asked to prioritize teacher quality issues, most groups singled out the high turnover rates at high-poverty schools.

The task force also held a series of more formal focus groups facilitated by professional facilitator Ed Schmidt. The focus groups, organized by specific community segments—parents of school-age children, non-parents, teachers including those from high-poverty schools, and business leaders—addressed topics similar to those taken up at the house meetings.



With the exception of the teachers, the focus group participants echoed their house-meeting counterparts' alarm about turnover rates at high-poverty schools. The teacher groups provided insight into the source of the turnover: poor working conditions and insufficient support in the classroom, particularly early in their careers. They also feel battered by the reform-of-the-day syndrome; they want more opportunity to participate in setting the direction for their schools.

The task force, with the assistance of Dr. Bailey's graduate students, aggregated the information gathered at the house meetings and the focus groups. Two products emerged: a list of valued teacher characteristics and a list of priority issues the initiative could address.

Action. People who care deeply about the quality of teaching in their communities will usually want to *do something* about it. Some may be inspired to lead a demonstration for higher teacher salaries; others may concentrate on making sure their children have a good breakfast and do their homework. While both kinds of action are important, you need *public* action to get the attention of decision makers.

Action Checklist for Community Members

- Join a teacher quality task force.
- Research what other communities have done about TQ issues.
- Write op-eds for the newspaper.
- Question officials at school board meetings and candidate forums; seek other opportunities to elicit views from education/government/civic leaders.
- Organize/participate in neighborhood discussions on teacher quality.
- Interview teachers, principals, and others to get their views on teacher quality and factors that affect teacher quality.
- Conduct school/classroom observations.
- Lead/work on petition drives.
- Vote in school board and other elections.
- Run for school board or work on the campaign of a school board candidate.

Evaluating Success

Don't forget to monitor the progress you are making toward your TQI goals. A continual cycle of planning, action, and assessment will help you refine and adjust your community engagement strategy as needed.

Use the community engagement goal tables (pp. 57–61) in **Tips**, the *Evaluation Planner* in CD-ROM **Tools**, and the questions listed below to target your public engagement objectives, decide how to reach those objectives, and establish indicators for the anticipated outcomes.

- Do our proposed community engagement goals, indicators, and activities directly advance our initiative and/or teacher quality goals and the strategy laid out in the early stages of our initiative?
- Have we developed the goals, indicators, and activities with input and support from our TQI partners?
- Are there any areas in which we could adjust our TQI activities to involve community members to a greater extent?
- Given our proposed community engagement activities, do we need to revise our resource allocation?

TIPS

TIP: Identifying and Working with Other Community Initiatives

What do we want to know about potential TQI partners?

- Who are the formal and informal leaders of the organization?
- Does the organization have any interest/experience in education issues?
- Is the organization currently involved in an education-related initiative? If so, what are the vision, goals, scope, partners, and progress to date of the initiative?
- What are the organization's areas of strength: research, community connections, resources/fundraising ability, public recognition, credibility in education issues?

How might we collaborate with other community groups/initiatives?

- Jointly sponsor an initiative.
- Advocate for and publicize each other's work.
- Share financial/in-kind resources.
- Share information/establish regular communication.

Where can we find information on other community groups and initiatives?

- Guidestar (www.guidestar.org) information—mission, reports, form 990s, and websites—on more than 850,000 nonprofits that file with the IRS; searchable by keyword, geographic location, income, and other variables
- Local grantmaking institutions and local branches of national grantmakers
- Relevant government agencies
- Media—published articles/op-eds and reporters covering community activities, regional events
- Word of mouth

How can we improve the way we work with other community groups/initiatives?

- Conduct informal but regular networking sessions for community groups sharing common interests.
- Develop a bank of information on consultants, computer technicians, and data analysis organizations gleaned from recommendations by local community organizations.
- Establish an online bulletin board/listserv where local community groups can post news, resource wish lists, information, and opinions.

- Keep a profile of community groups/initiatives working to improve public education in your community; such profiles can be used to enhance your knowledge base, outreach capacity, and institutional memory. Your profile should include the following information:
  - Contact information
  - Mission statement
  - Involvement in education
  - Previous interaction with your organization
  - Names and brief bios of formal and informal leaders
  - Communication log

TIP: Community Engagement Goals—TQI Partner Perspective

GOAL	UNDERLYING PREMISE	IDEAS FOR ACHIEVING THE GOAL
Elicit involvement from *many* and *varied* groups	Recognition of all groups involved and their frames of reference	Assess the community in terms of needs, perspectives, customs, and demographics.
Gain *sustainable* engagement	A continuous cycle of ideas, action, and assessment Broad involvement and buy-in *from* and *within* various stakeholder groups Individuals/groups champion the cause, provide institutional memory, and ensure a smooth engagement process	Design an engagement strategy based on these objectives: ▪ Specific *community awareness* objectives such as number of people attending meetings, number of hits on website ▪ Specific *community input* objectives such as number/diversity of people contributing ideas ▪ Specific *action* objectives such as greater participation in school board elections, advocacy activities ▪ Assessment of objectives and outcomes Dedicate specific staff and resources to community engagement. Identify concrete tasks. Identify groups interested in the initiative.

TIPS

GOAL	UNDERLYING PREMISE	IDEAS FOR ACHIEVING THE GOAL
Gain *sustainable* engagement		Identify influential spokespeople who can initiate conversations within their groups and build support that endures beyond any one person.
Help the community recognize/use its *power*	Knowledge of how the system works, including structures, processes, players, and terminology Support systems that give those traditionally disenfranchised an opportunity to participate Recognition of incremental successes to build confidence Demonstration of successful community initiatives	Provide advocacy training workshops and resource lists so that community members can learn about their rights and how to exercise them. Partner with grassroots organizations experienced in building community capacity to advocate. Work with civic organizations, faith-based groups, and other community groups to provide transportation, childcare, and other support. Plan incremental goals that allow community members to recognize/build on their power. Share success stories on other community initiatives.
Inspire *action*	Multiple, varied, and well-structured opportunities for involvement Active solicitation/ recognition of involvement	Provide a list of ways in which community members can get involved; ask for a commitment to participate in some way. Seek out and ask individuals to take part in a particular effort; be prepared to offer solutions for obstacles that may be cited; try not to take "no" for an answer. Personally and publicly recognize the efforts of individuals through words of praise; mentions in public meetings, newsletters; small tokens of appreciation.

GOAL	UNDERLYING PREMISE	IDEAS FOR ACHIEVING THE GOAL
Achieve teacher quality *results*	Well-thought-out strategy Strong internal capacity Strong partnerships Strong community support Conducive external environment	Early in the planning process, determine how community engagement will be used to help improve teacher quality. Assess internal capacity, community assets, and the external environment to make sure that the required resources and opportunities are in place to mobilize the community on behalf of teacher quality improvement. Set community engagement goals that are directly tied to improving teacher quality. Monitor community engagement efforts; revise or eliminate those that do not further the quality of teaching or build the social capacity of the community.

TIP: Community Engagement Goals—Community Perspective

GOAL	UNDERLYING PREMISE	IDEAS FOR ACHIEVING THE GOAL
Foster *understanding* of an issue	Increased awareness Increased knowledge Increased interest/ concern	Take steps—surveys, focus groups, interviews—to determine the current level of understanding of teacher quality among various groups. Target communications to the concerns and frames of reference of the specific groups. Create materials and conduct public meetings to educate the community about teacher quality. Plan opportunities, such as school visits and sharing of personal stories, so that community members can internalize teacher quality needs.

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TIPS

GOAL	UNDERLYING PREMISE	IDEAS FOR ACHIEVING THE GOAL
Build *commitment* for action	Recognition of the importance of the issue Awareness of how the issue affects family/friends Recognition that community pressure is the key to change Participation in relevant, meaningful activities Previous commitment and willingness to continue	Highlight the implications of teacher quality on student achievement. Target the TQI story to each stakeholder group by using details relevant to that group. Hold meetings/facilitate activities that are efficient, effective, and promote continued participation. Call on individuals/groups already involved in education improvement efforts to help create an ethos of dedication among new recruits.
Facilitate *empowerment*	Knowledgeable about the system Previous success in influencing the system	Develop training sessions in the structures, processes, players, and language of the school and local government systems. Share stories of other communities that have won change through their actions.
Generate a feeling of *urgency*	Knowledgeable about variations in student learning due to differences in teacher quality Recognition that school systems are more likely to change when pushed to do so	Discuss studies that demonstrate the impact of teacher quality on student achievement. Relate information on the economic benefits of having a high-quality education. Examine who has influence in the decision-making process; reiterate the need for greater grassroots involvement. Share success stories about other community TQIs.

GOAL	UNDERLYING PREMISE	IDEAS FOR ACHIEVING THE GOAL
Provide participation opportunities in which *benefits* outweigh costs	A strategic plan that maps anticipated goals, actions, and barriers Clearly defined roles and guidance for community member participation Examples of previous TQI success in other initiatives and by other organizations Support mechanisms/tactics, such as childcare, location choices, transportation, that promote participation Participation incentives: refreshments, gift certificates, public recognition, college credit for training sessions	Communicate the impact the initiative will have on children's education. Identify obstacles to participation and address them. Hold meetings/facilitate activities that are efficient, effective, and promote participation. Partner with other groups to provide support mechanisms. Share success stories about other community TQIs. Offer participation incentives.

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TIPS

TIP: Identifying Community Demographic Characteristics

DEMOGRAPHICS	BEARING ON	QUESTIONS ABOUT EACH GROUP
English language proficiency Race/ethnicity Socioeconomic status Parental status: • School-age children • No children • Grown children	Feeling well served by the education system Level/feeling of empowerment Language in which messages are delivered Media sources used to deliver messages Degree of responsibility felt for education in the community	What percentage of the community population does this group represent? What percentage of the voting population does this group represent? Is this group increasing or decreasing in size? What are the customs of this group? In what ways has this group gotten involved in education issues? What are needs specific to this group?

TIP: Planning and Facilitating Community Dialogue[8]

Facilitation Guidelines

- Articulate the problem clearly.
- Identify areas of agreement and disagreement.
- Identify barriers prior to pursuing solutions.
- Use existing links to schools and to other community programs.
- Engage all sectors of the community.

Reasons to Use a Facilitator in Community Discussions

- Facilitators lend formality, thereby encouraging participants to perceive the conversation as important.
- Facilitators can serve as neutral referee/cool head if discussion becomes heated.
- Facilitators help conversations flow and remain on task.
- Facilitators can be the contact person for participants.
- Facilitators ensure that all participants get an opportunity to express their views.

TIPS

Successful Conversations: Tips for Facilitators

- Prior to the meeting, assess special needs—translators, childcare, transportation, disabilities—and make necessary arrangements.
- Prior to the meeting, send reminders to discussion participants, along with directions and instructions.
- Arrive early and well prepared, with needed information and ample copies of material.
- Establish agreed-upon ground rules for discussion.
- Seek to get everyone to talk early in the conversation.
- Show you are listening.
- Engage participants in creating action-oriented next steps
- Send thank you notes to participants within a week of the meeting; include contact information.

FOUR

Putting Things in Motion

Chapter Highlights

- Drafting an improvement strategy
- Choosing avenues of change for implementing your strategy
- Crafting an action plan
- Assessing the initiative

Chapter Tips

- Creating an Action Plan

Chapter Tools

- Strategy Planner
- Avenues of Change
- Action Planner
- Evaluation Planner

Improving Conditions for Change by Shifting Leadership to the Community

Much of the initial TQI structure is predetermined by the need to empower the community through relevant information, the need to help the community make meaning of the information, and the need for community input to establish goals and a plan for reaching those goals.

Even though your destination may be set, the path ahead—a path that must be traveled by the community—is still uncertain.

Whatever the next steps in your TQI might be—a referendum on a TQ issue, election of new school board members, increased parental involvement in schools—the leadership baton must pass to the community. Improvement in the quality of teaching can be sustained only if the public takes responsibility for it.

This chapter offers ways to help your community chart a course toward better teacher quality. It's time to put things in motion.

Identifying Improvement Strategies

Now that you have data on pressing teacher quality issues, and on the external factors that affect those issues, you are in a position to identify strategies to achieve your TQI goals. Effective strategies have the following characteristics:

- Direct, sustainable impact on the TQ issue
- Impact on targeted populations
- Large impact in terms of total number of schools or number of schools in specific populations of focus
- Positive spillover effect within other areas of teacher quality
- Good chance of success given the identified factors/conditions
- Good chance of success given the viewpoints/receptivity/effectiveness of relevant decision makers and influencers

The conduciveness of the external environment will also influence your teacher quality improvement strategy. Let's say you want to offer certified, experienced teachers financial incentives to teach in high-needs schools. However, knowing there is very little chance of that happening given budget constraints in your district, you have three options:

- Propose the strategy at a time when the climate is more conducive.
- Fight for the proposal knowing that it could be a long uphill battle.
- Choose another strategy leading toward the same goal.

Based on our data analysis and community feedback, what is our most pressing TQ issue?
What changes do we need to make to reach our stated goal successfully?
What are our desired outcomes for this issue? How will our outcomes affect teaching quality and student achievement in the long run?
Putting Things in Motion
What will progress look like? How will we gauge change on the issue we're focused on?
What conditions influence this issue and how favorable are the conditions to achieve success?
What actions/role should we take in implementing our chosen strategies?
What are potential strategies to reach our stated outcomes? Which ones will yield the greatest gain?

There are no right or wrong answers. Political scientists refer to these opportunities for change as "policy windows." In some instances, it is better to wait for a window to open. In others, you make your own window or find another way through. You and your partners will need to determine which route offers the best chance of success. Thinking through who you need to influence and how you will influence them is an integral part of the strategizing process.

See the *Strategy Planner* in CD-ROM **Tools** for guidance on developing a TQ improvement strategy.

Selecting Avenues of Change

At this stage, you must face the realities of your TQI situation: Which decision makers/influencers must you work with, persuade, or work around? What external environment factors affect your TQI? What resources are available?

In selecting your avenues of change, you will need to achieve the following tasks:

- Identify players who can influence the implementation of your TQI strategy and their role in facilitating/hindering implementation.
- Review the relevant characteristics of each player, and of the external environment, using the *Community Asset Map*.
- Review your capacity, and that of your initiative partners, to perform the required tasks.
- Target the most effective/most feasible players and advocacy methods.

See *Avenues of Change* in CD-ROM **Tools** for help in thinking through the players, their relevant characteristics, the external environment, and the internal capacities that influence your avenue-of-change decision. This chapter takes a relatively cursory look at this topic; see *Community/Grassroots Organizing/Advocacy* (p. 82) in **Resources** for publications offering more details.

Crafting an Action Plan

The action plan is the document that outlines the remaining work of your teacher quality initiative. It includes the major components—see **Tips** (pp. 70–72) and the *Action Planner* on CD-ROM **Tools** for component descriptions and examples—of what your community hopes to accomplish and how it plans to accomplish it:

- TQI goals
- Improvement strategies
- Avenues of change
- Activities and resources
- Time frames and responsibilities
- Evaluation plan for determining success

MAINTOWN, USA

Determining Strategies for TQ Improvement

The Maintown task force has decided to focus on working conditions and their effect on teacher retention.

In reviewing the information gathered to date—overall turnover rate of 22 percent versus an average turnover rate of 40 percent in low-performing schools; teachers leaving the highest performing schools citing "retirement" and "relocating outside of district" as reasons for leaving versus teachers leaving low-performing schools citing "lack of support" and "dealing with bureaucracy" as reasons for leaving—the task force members realized they had to narrow the scope of their working conditions focus. Before taking on any additional research, they identified areas of working conditions they need to know more about:

- Which components of "working conditions" prompted teachers to leave and which prompted them to stay?
- What expectations do teachers, principals, and district administrators have regarding working conditions?
- What components of working conditions do teachers, principals, and district administrators feel they can control?

Next, they identified various ways to obtain this information:

- Review previous focus group findings on working conditions.
- Review related work by other organizations.
- Review national research relevant to the issues.
- Conduct teacher, principal, and district administrator interviews.
- Visit specific schools.

Then, they reviewed the information obtained as a result of their efforts:

- Neither teachers nor principals felt they had enough time to attend to required tasks.
- Teachers in schools with low turnover rates had more influence in school-level decision making.
- District administrators were leery of giving too much control to the schools since they perceived school faculty as lacking the capacity to make some school-level decisions.
- Current school staff meetings focused predominantly on minor administrative issues, not on professional or instructional concerns.

With these and other findings in hand, the task force members decided to focus on a pilot program for shared decision making in low-performing schools. Based on a model used successfully in other schools, they devised a protocol in which teachers have significant input into decisions affecting their classrooms and their schools; principals are encouraged to delegate tasks and spend more time in the classrooms; and teachers and principals feel more empowered, professional, and collegial.

The task force then conducted an analysis of the changes, commitments, and resources the pilot program would entail; figured out how to evaluate the program; and determined what would be required to take the program to scale across the district. The Maintown Teacher Quality Task Force is now ready to work with other community members to put this shared decision-making process in place.

Setting It All in Motion

The steps to launch your teacher quality improvement strategy are now in place. Information has been gathered, the community is engaged, relationships have been forged, and decision makers are on notice.

The implementation of individual TQI strategies will vary according to community factors, goals, and action plans. Some general advice for the implementation stage follows:

- Work closely with your partners during the implementation process.
- Find ways to involve community members in implementation activities.
- Measure progress regularly and revise the plan as needed.
- Keep communications open with the public, the school district, and the teachers union.
- Celebrate successes, even small ones, along the way.
- Network with other communities that have launched TQIs to share lessons and resources.

While much work remains to be done, the reform environment your TQI has created will increase community support for public education, the quality of teaching in local school classrooms, and, ultimately, the level of student achievement. And *that* makes all the hard work worthwhile.

We look forward to hearing about your success.

TIPS

TIP: Creating an Action Plan

The following descriptions and examples of action plan components present an overview of the wide variety of teacher quality issues, strategies, and actions that can be addressed in a TQI. ***Note:*** The examples are simplified and don't include the numerous actions, inputs, benchmarks, data sources, and so forth that you will need for all identified strategies.

Vision and goals. The vision derived early in the action planning process, along with the goals identified after data collection and community input, drives all initiative actions.

So, for each activity, ask, "Does this work in conjunction with other activities to bring about our desired vision/goals?" There might be several subgoals within the initiative components; make sure they serve the larger initiative goal.

Be sure to specify capacity-building or community-access goals and make sure they are not isolated from other TQI goals; initiative activities should further all identified goals including those related to capacity and access.

Improvement strategy. The improvement strategy lays out the approach you will take in pursuit of your teacher quality goals. This brief description should highlight the external factors being targeted for action. A sample strategy follows:

Teachers cite lack of autonomy as a major factor contributing to their dissatisfaction with working conditions and, consequently, to the high teacher turnover rates in the district. The initiative is working to develop a pilot program for shared decision making in the schools so that teachers can have more control over their working conditions.

Avenues of change. This is the "meat" of the action plan, the exact steps that will be taken to facilitate implementation of the improvement strategy. The following table gives an example of one action taken in pursuit of more equitable school financing.

IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY	ACTION	TARGETED PATH FOR CHANGE	ADVOCACY METHOD
Create an equitable school finance system	File a lawsuit against the state	Judicial	Enlist other districts to become plaintiffs and present a broad-based case to the court for more equitable school financing

Activities and inputs. Once broad actions have been identified, outline specific activities and needed inputs to accomplish the action.

Time frame and responsibilities. All tasks should have a specific deadline and a specific person responsible for their completion. Consider creating a broad timeline and table of responsibilities along with more detailed task lists/timelines for individual actions. Since "time frame and responsibilities" are closely linked to "activities and inputs," these four elements can be viewed as a single component of the action plan.

ACTION Work with state assembly to repeal teacher residency requirement		
ACTIVITY	**INPUTS**	**TIME FRAME/ RESPONSIBILITIES**
Write report documenting detrimental effects on students of such requirement Present report to legislative committee	District data Hours of staff time Access to state assembly	
Maintain regular communication with education subcommittee members	Access to education subcommittee members Staff time Access to electronic communication	
Release report to public	Printing costs Staff time working with graphic design team and printer Talent of graphic design team and competency of the printer Staff time to publish report to organizational website Costs to promote publication's release Staff time to market the publication	
Publish opinion letter in newspaper	Access to opinion page editor Staff time	

TIPS

Evaluation plan. The importance of gauging progress is emphasized throughout this guide. Evaluation will help spot needed changes; it will also help you highlight incremental successes. A good evaluation plan will link goals to indicators, benchmarks, and methods of measurement.

GOAL Increase the percentage of highly qualified teachers in the district			
INDICATOR	**BENCHMARKS**	**SOURCES OF INFORMATION/ DATA**	**METHODS OF MEASUREMENT**
Percentage of teachers reaching the highest level on district knowledge/skills scale	15% of teachers in every school at highest level by year 2004 25% by 2006 40% by 2008 60% by 2010	District's human resource department	Compile information from district's human resource department into categories of achievement

The evaluation plan should also indicate how you intend to assess *if* and *how* the actions, inputs, and environmental factors are contributing to the goal—an ongoing assessment known as formative evaluation—and what steps will be taken if the assessment reveals there has been no or limited progress.

See *Project Evaluation* (p. 84) in **Resources** for a list of evaluation planning resources.
See the *Evaluation Planner* in CD-ROM **Tools** for help in outlining an evaluation plan.

Endnotes

1. In 2000, 130 million people registered to vote. See www.census.gov/prod2002pubs/p20-542.pdf.
2. See Public Agenda Online. www.publicagenda.org/issues/pcc_detail.cfm?issue_type=education&list=5
3. Core academic area teachers must be "highly qualified" by the end of the 2005–06 school year. Newly hired teachers teaching in Title I schools were subject to those criteria in 2002. For more information about the new ESEA, see the No Child Left Behind (www.nochildleftbehind.gov) or US Department of Education (www.ed.gov) websites.
4. "Demanding Quality Public Education in Tough Times: What Voters Want from Elected Leaders." Commissioned by Public Education Network/Education Week, February 2003.
5. The TQI process is designed to produce an action strategy, so there is no way to know at this point what funding might be required. However, you should have information on resources that can be dedicated to the initiative, on the district budget, on possible resource reallocation options, and on other grant and in-kind resources.
6. Stephen Clements, "Teacher Data Infrastructures in Selected Southeastern States: Progress, Problems, and Possibilities," White Paper Summary Document. The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality. www.teachingquality.org
7. This idea comes from the *Community Action Toolkit*, developed by the National Education Goals Panel.
8. Based on Public Education Network's *Communities at Work: A Guidebook of Strategic Interventions for Community Change*.

Resources

RESOURCES

General Education Resources

American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, www.aacte.org

American Evaluation Association, www.eval.org

Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, www.ctpweb.org

Consortium for Policy Research in Education, www.cpre.org

Consortium for Research on Educational Accountability and Teacher Evaluation, www.wmich.edu/evalctr/create/

Council for Basic Education, www.c-b-e.org

Education Commission of the States, www.ecs.org

ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education, www.ericsp.org

Institute for Educational Leadership, www.iel.org

Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, www.ccsso.org/intasc.html

National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification, www.nasdtec.org

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, www.nbpts.org

National Center for Education Information, www.ncei.com

National Center for Education Statistics, www.nces.ed.gov

National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching, www.tc.columbia.edu/~ncrest

National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, www.nctaf.org

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, www.ncate.org

National Council on Teacher Quality, www.nctq.org

National Education Goals Panel, www.negp.gov

National Parent Information Network, www.npin.org

National Staff Development Council, www.nsdc.org

Southeast Center for Teaching Quality, www.teachingquality.org

Teacher Education Accreditation Council, www.teac.org

Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, www.fordhamfoundation.org

Title II, www.title2.org

US Department of Education, www.ed.gov

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Freedom and Accountability section, No Child Left Behind website. www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/esea/nclb/partx2.html

No Child Left Behind Database. Education Commission of the States, www.nclb.ecs.org/nclb/

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Cross-City Campaign for Urban School Reform, www.crosscity.org

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Educational Research Service, www.ers.org

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Data Resources

Online Tools

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- *Education Week*. Quality Counts. Annual report on state policies, and state statistics available. www.edweek.org
- The Institute for Educational Leadership has several toolkits, including one on using data effectively. www.iel.org
- The District Policy Inventory www.nctaf.org/resourcedistrict/policy_inventory1.htm, from the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, www.nctaf.org, is a diagnostic tool to help districts examine policies that affect teacher quality.
- The National School Board Association schoolboarddata.org maintains a list of publications on different aspects of effective school board management including tools for self-assessment and guides to community engagement.
- Schools and Staffing Survey (1999–2000), National Center for Education Statistics. www.nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/asp.

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Parent & Community Involvement

Parent Organizations

- Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships, www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/center.htm
- National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, www.ncpie.org
- The National Parent Teacher Association, www.pta.org
- Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, www.pfie.ed.gov
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Community Organizations

Association of Community Organizations for Change Now (ACORN), www.acorn.org

Center for Community Change, www.communitychange.org

Future Search Conferences, www.futuresearch.net

National Issues Forum, www.nifi.org

Public Agenda, www.publicagenda.org

Reconnecting Communities and Schools, www.theharwoodinstitute.org

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Initiative Management

Foundations

Council on Foundations, www.cof.org/index.htm

The Foundation Center, www.fdncenter.org

Foundations.org, www.foundations.org

Philanthropy

The Chronicle of Philanthropy, www.philanthropy.com

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Project Evaluation

American Evaluation Association, www.eval.org

Harvard Family Research Project, www.gse.Harvard.edu/~hfrp/

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TQI PIONEERS

OERI TEACHER QUALITY GRANTEES	TQ RESEARCH/ REPORTS/PRODUCTS
Alliance for Quality Education Grier Mullins, Executive Director 1990 Augusta Street, Suite 1500 Greenville, SC 29605 864 233 4133 www.allianceforqualityed.org	The Report on Teacher Quality in Greenville
Lincoln Public Schools Foundation Barbara Bartle, Executive Director 5901 O Street Lincoln, NE 68510 402 436 1612 www.foundation.lps.org	Teacher Quality: Present and Future (video)
Los Angeles Educational Partnership Susan Way-Smith, President & CEO 315 West Ninth Street, Suite 1110 Los Angeles, CA 90015 213 622 5237 www.laep.org	Quality Teaching Initiative: Los Angeles County Data Quality Teaching: Then, Now and Future Directions
Mon Valley Education Consortium Linda Croushore, Executive Director Jackie Foor, Teacher Quality Research 336 Shaw Avenue McKeesport, PA 15132 412 678 9215 www.mvec.org	Head of the Class www.eplc.org/teacherquality.html
New Visions for Public Schools Robert Hughes, President Leanne Shimabukuro, TQ Program Officer 96 Morton Street New York, NY 10014 212 645 5110 www.newvisions.org	Prepared to Teach? www.newvisions.org/resources/report2_1.shtml What Can Parents Do about Teacher Quality? www.newvisions.org/downloads/teacherquality.pdf
Philadelphia Education Foundation Nancy McGinley, Executive Director Elizabeth Useem, Director of Research Seven Benjamin Franklin Parkway Suite 700 Philadelphia, PA 19103 215 665 1400 www.philaedfund.org	Tables on Teacher Retention and the Distribution of Teachers' Certification Levels and Experience www.philaedfund.org/pdfs/teacher_retention_tables.PDF The Retention and Qualifications of New Teachers In Philadelphia's High-Poverty Middle Schools www.philaedfund.org/pdfs/the%20retention%20and%20qualifications%20of%20new%20teachers.pdf

TQI PIONEERS

OERI TEACHER QUALITY GRANTEES	TQ RESEARCH/ REPORTS/PRODUCTS
Public Education Foundation Dan Challener, President Annie Hall, Senior Director, Programs and Policy 100 East Tenth Street, Suite 500 Chattanooga, TN 37402 423 265 9403 www.pefchattanooga.org	Highly Effective Teacher Research www.pefchattanooga.org/www/docs/104
Wake Education Partnership Tony Habit, President Valerie Brown, Vice President, Programs 706 Hillsborough Street, Suite A Raleigh, NC 27603 919 821 7609 www.wakeedpartnership.org	All for All: Teacher Excellence for Every Child www.wakeedpartnership.org/Research&Reports/all_for_all.html

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PUBLIC EDUCATION NETWORK

Public Education Network (PEN) is a national organization of local education funds (LEFs) and individuals working to improve public schools and build citizen support for quality public education in low-income communities across the nation.

PEN believes public engagement is the oft-missing ingredient in school reform, and that the level of public involvement ultimately determines the quality of education provided by public schools. Its mission, therefore, is to build public demand and mobilize resources for quality public education through a national constituency of organizations and individuals.

PEN and its LEF members seek to bring the community voice into the debate on quality public education in the firm belief that an active, vocal constituency will ensure every child, in every community, a quality public education. PEN members work on behalf of almost 11 million students in more than 1,200 school districts.

Join Our Community

A Community Action Guide to Teacher Quality is designed to help your community plan and implement initiatives that will improve the quality of teaching in your public schools. In launching a TQ initiative, you join with communities across the nation taking on similar challenges.

PEN is now gathering information on new learning, resources, tools, publications, products, and outreach programs that are emerging from TQ efforts in communities just like yours.

To receive TQ updates and additional materials at no charge, just fill out this card and drop it in the mail. Or, sign up on our website at *www.PublicEducation.org/TQ_Signup.asp*.

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• Scanning Decision Makers and Influencers	(ScanDMIs.pdf)
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Evaluation Planner	(EvalPlan.pdf)
External Factors Framework	(ExFactor.pdf)
Focus Group/Interview Questions	(FocusGrp.pdf)
Initiative Priorities	(Priority.pdf)
Out-of-Field Teaching Memo	(OutOfFld.pdf)
Strategy Planner	(Strategy.pdf)
Teacher Data Framework	(DataFrme.pdf)
Teacher Data Framework References	(DataRef.pdf)

100A

Our Vision

Every day, in every community, *every* child in America benefits from a quality public education.

Our Mission

To build public demand and mobilize resources for quality public education for *all* children through a national constituency of local education funds and individuals.

PUBLIC EDUCATION NETWORK

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